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ABSTRACT

To clarify and examine conventional wisdom and stereotypes about adult literacy, this paper focuses on the approaches of individually oriented and community-oriented programs. An examination of the literature base (encompassing research reports, informal accounts, manuals and handbooks, and theoretical, philosophical, and policy articles) leads to the conclusion that these different approaches work successfully with different segments of the illiterate adult population. The underlying issues of conflicting definitions of illiteracy, the nature of the reading process, characteristics of illiterate adults, and the purposes of literacy education are elaborated. A discussion follows of the implications of these issues for the choice of program models and of approaches to such program aspects as planning and evaluation, instructor preparation, curriculum, and instructional methods and materials, from the standpoints of the individual orientation and the community-based orientation. This information is synthesized in a concluding chapter that presents a series of recommendations for the improvement of literacy education: a wider range of program models, greater emphasis on community-oriented efforts, more leadership from literacy educators, a state and national context for literacy programs, new models of teaching-learning interaction, increased input from illiterate adults, and additional research on reading processes, competency-based education, volunteers, student characteristics, and educational technology. (SK)

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ADULT LITERACY EDUCATION: CURRENT AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

by

Arlene Fingeret
North Carolina State University

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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CREATING THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN ADULT LITERACY EDUCATION . . . . . .

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FOREWORD

The Educational Resources Information Center Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education (ERIC/ACVE) is one of 16 clearinghouses in a nationwide information system that is funded by the National Institute of Education. One of the functions of the Clearinghouse is to interpret the literature that is entered into the ERIC database. This paper is of particular interest to adult education practitioners, administrators, researchers, and graduate students as well as those who are responsible for formulating policy in adult education at the Federal, State, and local levels.

The profession is indebted to Arlene Fingeret, Assistant Professor in the Department of Adult and Community College Education, North Carolina State University, for her scholarship in the preparation of this paper. In the past, Dr. Fingeret has served on faculties at Syracuse University and the University of Massachusetts at Boston as well as directed a community-based adult education program in Cambridge, Massachusetts. In 1983 Dr. Fingeret, who has published a number of articles on adult literacy, served as guest editor for a special issue of Lifelong Learning: The Adult Years on the topic of illiteracy. Her research has focused on the sociocultural characteristics of American illiterate adults.

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Robert E. Taylor
Executive Director
The National Center for Research
in Vocational Education

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To clarify and examine conventional wisdom and stereotypes about adult literacy, this paper focuses on the approaches of individually oriented and community-oriented programs. An examination of the literature base (encompassing research reports, informal accounts, manuals and handbooks, and theoretical, philosophical, and policy articles) leads to the conclusion that these different approaches work successfully with different segments of the illiterate adult population. The underlying issues of conflicting definitions of illiteracy, the nature of the reading process, characteristics of illiterate adults, and the purposes of literacy education are elaborated. A discussion follows of the implications of these issues for the choice of program models and of approaches to such program aspects as planning and evaluation, instructor preparation, curriculum, and instructional methods and materials, from the standpoints of the individual orientation and the community-based orientation. This information is synthesized in a concluding chapter that presents a series of recommendations for the improvement of literacy education: a wider range of program models, greater emphasis on community-oriented efforts, more leadership from literacy educators, a State and National context for literacy programs, new models of teaching-learning interaction, increased input from illiterate adults, and additional research on reading processes, competency-based education, volunteers, student characteristics, and educational technology.

Information on adult literacy may be found in the ERIC system under the following descriptors and identifiers: Adult Basic Education; Adult Educators; *Adult Literacy; Adult Reading Programs; Community Action; Competency Based Education; Disadvantaged; Educational Policy; Educational Research; Functional Literacy; *Illiteracy; Individual Instruction; *Literacy Education; *Reading Instruction; *Reading Processes; Schemata (Cognition); Subcultures; Teacher Education; Adult Performance Level; *Community Based Education. (Asterisks indicate terms having particular relevance.)

INTRODUCTION

Adult literacy education in the United States has become a priority topic. In 1983 the President of the United States created an Initiative on Adult Literacy that resulted in the National Adult Literacy Project; in 1984 leaders of the business community created the Business Council for Effective Literacy; authors in the news and the popular media have published numerous articles about the economic and social implications of illiteracy. Educators are striving to identify, create, and implement increasingly effective instructional programs with limited resources. Policy papers, research reports, journal articles, conference proceedings, and other documents are being developed at an accelerating rate and are being disseminated through a multitude of journals, lists, networks, organizations, clearinghouses, or local contacts.

In this context, any literature review, no matter how thorough at the time of its writing, cannot be seen as definitive. Patterns exist in the literature that have important implications for researchers, policymakers, and educators, however. The objectives of this monograph, therefore, are to present and analyze those patterns that appear consistently in the literature and to offer some recommendations based upon that analysis. This is not intended to be an inclusive presentation of all the information contained within the literature reviewed, nor is it intended to give the impression that the field is unchanging--indeed, it changes as you read this paragraph.

This paper is based upon an examination of publications. As such, it is limited by the author's experience and the contents of the literature. It is hoped that this work will stimulate field research that would enable a more accurate and in-depth picture of the current field of practice. The area covered in this monograph has been narrowed to focus directly on initial literacy education rather than on improvement of preexisting literacy skills. It also excludes English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) instruction, it emphasizes reading more than the writing and computational aspects of literacy education, and it does not encompass the general community development literature. Despite these limitations, it is hoped that this work will contribute to the continuing development of effective educational opportunities for illiterate adults.

THE LITERATURE BASE

To locate material for this monograph, an extensive ERIC search was conducted that yielded literally thousands of microfiche and journal article references. From ERIC materials, a broad sample of publications dated between 1978 and the present was reviewed, as well as a smaller sample of earlier references that appear to have had an impact on the field according to later citations. References in related fields were also reviewed, as well as a sample of books published in the past 5 years or those that appear to have had a significant impact on the field (e.g., Mezirow, Darkenwald, and Knox 1975). Finally, to ensure that an adequate range of efforts of adult literacy educators was represented, a small number of State adult basic education directors and local literacy administrators were contacted for copies of local program newsletters, policy statements, and other publications not available through ERIC or the library system.

The literature in adult literacy education is voluminous, conveying the image of a substantive and useful knowledge base. However, a glance through an extensive bibliography, such as that generated by a thorough ERIC search, leaves the reader immersed in acronyms and discrete, site-specific reports that are difficult to relate to each other or to the planning of future efforts. In addition, the literature is spread over a range of disciplinary perspectives, compounding the difficulty of addressing such specific questions as "How do adults learn to read?"

Some publications are developed purely for internal program use; materials distributed more widely appear to fall into one of the following four major categories, although there is diversity within and some overlapping among the types:

1. Formal research studies, both quantitative and, to a much lesser extent, qualitative. These address such areas as the characteristics of the student population, the extent of illiteracy, the nature of the learning-to-read process, and evaluation of specific instructional approaches, instructional materials, and program development strategies.

2. Informal accounts of experiences in developing programs, teaching adults how to read, designing materials, and engaging in other activities pertinent to adult literacy education.

3. How-to manuals and guides designed for instructors, literacy program administrators, program developers, or volunteers that are based upon formal research findings to varying extents.

4. Theoretical and philosophical articles exploring some of the underlying assumptions, values, and beliefs about adult literacy and illiteracy, the relationship between illiteracy and other "social problems," approaches to programming and instruction, and other relevant issues.

Each of these is explored in some detail in the rest of this chapter.

Research Reports

Research may be broadly defined as the systematic examination of some phenomenon. In one sense, everybody who engages in adult literacy education is a researcher, developing an initial understanding of a situation, defining problem areas, developing a working hypothesis about how to approach the problems, designing and implementing a plan, and collecting information about the extent to which the plan "worked" or needs to be revised. Educators can benefit from the results of each other's everyday inquiry most easily when it is approached systematically and presented with rich detail. The inquiry can be called formal research to the degree it is conducted according to the methodological rules established by social scientists.

Formal research often is conducted by students or faculty in graduate education programs who tend to use traditional quantitative research methods. Quantitative methods are most useful when variables can be isolated and context is stable--conditions that rarely occur in the dynamic and complex field of literacy education. As a result, many researchers have been caught in the lack of fit between the situation, the problem, and the demands of the research paradigm. The situation appears to be improving, however, as adult literacy educators embrace a wider range of research approaches. In addition to the continuing quest for improved quantitative studies, an exciting body of qualitative or field research is emerging.

Qualitative research focuses on knowledge in context and supports the inductive development of theory rather than deductive hypothesis testing. Qualitative research is less suited to making causal generalizations than is quantitative research, but it is a better model for studying dynamic situations in which actors and context cannot be separated (Boraks 1979). Qualitative research is by no means new, but today it is enjoying a new level of acceptance among adult literacy educators. Qualitative studies are beginning to address issues such as the strategies with which adult beginning readers approach reading tasks (Boraks and Schumacher 1981), the culture of illiterate adults (Fingeret 1983a), and the characteristics of adult basic education programs as social contexts (Micklos 1982).

In addition to methodological problems, published research often has suffered from poor presentation (e.g., baseline data missing from the article) and dependence upon untested assumptions. Critics of the research base point to specific areas that need additional attention. These include the functional literacy requirements of specific nonschool activities and occupations, the use of research findings by practitioners, literacy program curriculum

development and instructional design, and the relationship between research and policy.

Informal Accounts

Adult literacy educators have published numerous informal reports of program operation and literacy instruction. These reports often do not have an identified research base or methodology but are attempts to share practices that have proven useful in specific circumstances. Some anecdotal reports are excellent (e.g., Mattran 1980; Milligan 1982). They provide a window into the world of literacy education practice, and they communicate both the frustration and the satisfaction of working with illiterate adults. Most important are the personal insights that have developed from the work described, the subtle nuances of new understanding that the author contributes as a result of this experience.

Unfortunately, many anecdotal accounts appear to be modeled on formal research reports rather than developed as a form of their own. They often are missing information about what came prior to and what is expected to follow the work described. In addition, authors often do not provide information about the programmatic context that is important to educators considering adapting the practice in their own settings. When thoughtfully developed, however, informal reports of practice can be a rich resource for other literacy educators as well as a fertile source of ideas for formal research studies.

Manuals and Handbooks

Adult literacy educators appear to be enamored of handbooks, probably owing to the large percentage of part-time personnel with little professional training in adult literacy education. Handbooks often are developed as special projects by individual State education agencies and usually are addressed to the instructor or volunteer, although some have been written for program administrators (e.g., Slatkin 1981a; Wells and Ulmer 1972). Also included in this category are annotated bibliographies and curriculum guides.

Many handbooks contain similar types of information, although the specific content and writing style will reflect the characteristics of the program and the handbook's audience. There is often a section containing background information on adult basic education, the characteristics of illiterate adults, the role of the adult literacy instructor, and the larger program context. Another section usually contains more concrete how-to information about diagnosis of learning needs and related instructional techniques, along with materials and other resources. In addition, handbooks often contain an annotated bibliography or a list of local referrals for professional assistance.

Handbook authors often embrace an eclectic approach to literacy instruction, providing a number of alternative approaches and encouraging instructors to use whatever works with each individual. This approach allows authors to

provide answers for instructors while maintaining flexibility as instructors encounter adults with differing learning styles. Curriculum guides and annotated bibliographies appear particularly useful when the comments facilitate connecting specific materials with particular instructional approaches.

Handbook authors face the difficult challenge of portraying complex processes comprehensibly to new instructors and administrators who may have no educational background in the field and who must respond quickly in their new positions. Handbooks must be clearly written and practical. Unfortunately, the complexities of literacy instruction are oversimplified at times, creating the impression that much more is known than actually may be substantiated by the research literature. Complicated discussions of dilemmas and concepts are sacrificed, research often is neither alluded to nor referenced, and the wide philosophical and theoretical rifts in the field rarely are mentioned. Consequently, new instructors essentially are excluded from critically assessing the handbook's content. Handbooks generally are didactic, written as references rather than as instructional material. Rossman, Fisk, and Roehl (1984) and Slatkin (1981b) are notable exceptions.

New instructors and administrators are promising sources of new perspectives and critical trials of innovative practices. They need the how-to information contained in handbooks and manuals, but they also need to understand the problems and issues facing the field. Handbooks may not be the appropriate vehicle for discussing these larger issues; perhaps some type of supplementary material can be developed to draw new instructors and administrators into the ongoing conversations in the field.

Theoretical, Philosophical, and Policy Articles

Federal policy is credited with the explosion of adult literacy education in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, exemplifying the relationship between politics, policy, and education. Yet, education is portrayed as a politically neutral activity in the United States, focusing concern on what to do and how to do it. Discussion of the frameworks within which such responses are formed and through which they are justified remains largely unincorporated into the bulk of the literature produced for practitioners. This is by far the smallest category in the adult literacy education literature, and it has been dominated by academicians and international and community-based literacy educators.

It has not been unusual to encounter critics of American literacy education (e.g., Kavale and Lindsey 1977), but the literature appears to be slowly growing. Hunter and Harman's (1979) influential book publicized the data that existing American literacy programs apparently reach only a small percentage of American illiterate adults. As a result, there appears to be a somewhat renewed interest in critical appraisal of the literacy education effort, including its underlying assumptions, beliefs, and values. American adult literacy educators increasingly are engaging in debate about issues such as the nature of illiteracy (e.g., Eberle and Robinson 1980), the underlying assumptions of literacy work (e.g., O'Brien 1979), and involvement in influencing the policy-making process (e.g., Taylor 1983a; 1983b). In addition,

there appears to be developing concern with the quality of thought, practice, and publication in American adult literacy education.

Conclusion

The extensive literature base in American adult literacy education is dominated by handbooks and manuals that meet the specific short-term needs of instructors and program administrators but that are of limited usefulness in generating new, longer-term approaches. Contents of these handbooks often imply that American adult literacy educators form a relatively homogeneous group with common aims and a shared vocabulary. This is not a true picture, as an examination of research reports and theoretical and philosophical publications shows that literacy educators hold widely differing notions about the nature of illiteracy, the reading process, the characteristics of illiterate adults, and the purposes of adult literacy education. These differences stem partly from varying values, beliefs, and disciplinary perspectives. Adult literacy education in the United States cannot be understood without more in-depth examination of these underlying issues.

UNDERLYING ISSUES

This chapter is intended to provide some insight into the variety of perspectives brought to the adult literacy education enterprise. It is organized around three basic issues:

- o Definitions of literacy
- o Learning to read and the reading process
- o Characteristics of illiterate adults and the purposes of adult literacy programs

Definitions of Literacy

Literacy is a shifting, abstract term, impossible to define in isolation from a specific time, place, and culture; literacy, therefore, is described as historically and culturally relative. Illiteracy can be understood only in relation to literacy; it is the absence or lack of literacy, rather than a concept with its own set of characteristics and standards. Definitions of literacy share an emphasis on reading, writing, and, usually, computation skills but differ in their descriptions of the extent of skill and the criteria for application. Therefore, statistics on the amount of illiteracy vary, generally due to the use of different definitions and related ways of measuring, or counting, illiterate adults. Clearly, literacy is a social construct rather than an act of nature (Bormuth 1973).

Definitions of literacy have undergone a kind of transformation in the past 50 years. The U.S. Census Bureau in the 1930s and 1940s referred to the simple ability to read and write a message (Cook 1977). When it became apparent that this did not guarantee the effective or critical application of those skills, functional literacy emerged as a term connoting the use of reading and writing skills in specific contexts. Since that time, functional literacy has broadened until it is now used often to refer to an individual's more generalized competence in the social world. Hunter and Harman (1979) offer the following definition:

> [Functional literacy is] the possession of skills perceived as necessary by particular persons and groups to fulfill their own self-determined objectives as family and community members, citizens, consumers, jobholders, and members of social, religious or other associations of their choosing. This includes the ability to obtain information they want and to use that information for their own and others' well-being; the ability to read and write adequately to satisfy the requirements they set for themselves as being important for their own lives; the ability to deal

positively with demands made on them by society; and the ability to solve the problems they face in their daily lives. (pp. 7-8)

One of the major forces behind the efforts to define literacy is the desire of policymakers to count illiterate adults. Hunter and Harman's definition, while conceptually true to the relative nature of literacy, is impractical for assessing the extent of illiteracy. It allows the judgment of literacy to reside with the individual rather than with an external authority, such as the Census Bureau, and it requires that different criteria be established for each cultural group and social setting. In addition, Hunter and Harman's definition, similar to many others, implies that there is a relationship between literacy and personal power or control over life circumstances. Literacy is seen as liberating, enabling action on one's environment. This aspect of literacy is motivating for many literacy students and educators but does little to assist the current trend toward measurement as the primary form of accountability.

The concept of functional literacy always has created difficulties for measurement. Most countries have adopted public school grade level criteria to simplify gathering statistics, although there is not necessarily a strict relationship between years of schooling and literacy ability. Problems with grade level completion criteria for literacy statistics are well documented (e.g., Coles 1976). As an alternative, some educational researchers have attempted to create criterion-referenced instruments for measuring functional literacy, such as the Adult Performance Level (APL) Study (Northcutt et al. 1975). These are paper-and-pencil tests that require the completion of tasks similar to those encountered by literate middle-class adults in daily life, such as reading television or train schedules or writing a check. The APL survey produced one of the most widely cited figures for the extent of illiteracy in the United States: 23 million Americans. The final report claims that there is a positive correlation between the ability to complete the tasks successfully and success as defined in terms of income, education, and job status.

The APL research has had a significant positive impact on the general public's awareness of the extent of illiteracy in America as well as on curriculum development efforts. However, there are substantive criticisms of the APL research and conclusions. Cervero (1981) points out that the APL survey basically is a reading test, rather than a test of broader functional competence, as claimed by the instrument's developers. Griffith and Cervero (1977) question the validity of the basic assumptions of the APL project. They assert that the APL items reflect one particular value bias, that of the middle-class persons involved in their development, rather than a generalized set of societal competences. Diehl (1979) points out that the APL design assumes that less-successful people are less literate--this is unproven. Kirsch and Guthrie (1977-78) summarize, "[On APL] the items were selected to discriminate on the dependent measure, success. In this normative way of thinking, a significant proportion of the population will always be either marginally competent . . . or functionally incompetent" (p. 499).

The APL study is fundamentally political, implying a particular concept of the good life (Levine 1982); this is particularly problematic for older adults

who may not be concerned with literacy as a means to increased economic status (Allington and Walmsley 1980; Heisel and Larson 1984; Kasworm and Courtenay 1982). The APL work also emphasizes reading at the expense of writing (Levine 1982) and encourages the development of normatively based programs rather than focusing on the individual's judgment of personal literacy needs within a specific environment (O'Brien 1979). Furthermore, research has shown that specific student preferences do not necessarily correspond to APL categories (Gillis and Longnion 1982).

Definitions that categorize individuals and present literacy as a finished product rather than a process risk distorting the rich plurality of American culture. As societal demands and personal abilities change, an individual's status as literate may change also (Courtenay, Stevenson, and Sukart 1982). "Literacy is not necessarily an all or none proposition," comment Dauzat and Dauzat (1977). "There are levels of literacy and different tasks require different types and levels of literacy skills" (p. 40).

Social and behavioral science research on literacy and the nature of the reading process simply adds to the confusion. Broad issues and the aspects of literacy and reading that do not fall clearly into one of the disciplinary domains often are not addressed, and narrow disciplinary perspectives "may push the research to the point where it retains very little relation to the practical issues that originally inspired it." (Roueche and Comstock 1981, p. xviii). Attempts to synthesize one grand definition of literacy are unsuccessful since "the differences do not lie in testable propositions or hypotheses, but in assumptions that are not open to question" (ibid.).

Definitions serve many purposes and interests. In the case of literacy, Hunter and Harman's (1979) definition can guide program developers and instructors but presents difficulties for policymakers and program evaluators in this era of quantifiable accountability. A National set of standards for a concept that is relative in relation to time and culture will, to some extent, undermine efforts to develop literacy programs that are appropriate to the varying needs of adults in their social contexts. However, there may be a way to count functionally illiterate adults without imposing normative standards. Rather than the traditional approach of testing the skills considered necessary for functioning by some group of experts, it may be possible to survey adults concerning their perceptions about the adequacy of their literacy skills in relation to their daily activities and their future aspirations. This could be accompanied by some measure of their abilities, similar to that used in the APL research, but with the recognition that an inability does not necessarily imply functional incompetence.

The Nature of Reading and the Learning to Read Process

The concept of literacy might be more easily defined if the act of reading and the process of becoming a proficient reader were more completely understood. Anyone even superficially familiar with the literature in the field of reading is aware that there are competing schools of thought about the most proficient ways to teach reading to children (Chall 1967). It is not surprising that the same controversies are reflected in adult reading instruction

literature. Few adult educators, however, have actively engaged in the debate, and many literacy educators seem to assume that research conducted with children is equally applicable to adults. This is not necessarily supported by the small amount of research that has been conducted on the strategies used by adults learning how to read (e.g., Boraks and Schumacher 1981).

Reading is conceptualized in the current literature in one of three ways: top down, bottom up, or a combination of these two, known as interactive. In the bottom-up model comprehension of the overall message of the text is slowly built up by accumulating the smaller pieces, sound by sound and word by word. The top-down model assumes that persons approach the reading process with certain cognitive structures already in place; comprehension results from using what is already known to interpret text.

There are fundamental differences between these approaches. The bottom-up approach assumes that comprehension is built upon successful decoding of individual words, while the top-down approach assumes that successful decoding of new words depends upon understanding the context in which those words must make sense to the reader. The bottom-up approach is known as a subskill approach and it supports the instruction of skills in isolation, while the top-down approach stresses the importance of meaningful context in which the semantic (word meaning) and syntactic (language structure) information necessary to construct meaning is present. The bottom-up approach immediately confronts new learners with how much they do not know; the top-down approach builds upon and values that which is already known. Bottom-up approaches stress the learning of rules; top-down approaches emphasize meaning.

A third approach, the interactive model, combines both top down and bottom up, with an emphasis on the assumptions underlying the top-down approach. That is, reading is viewed as a process of constructing meaning, and phonic analysis is seen as one of a number of useful tools for identifying specific words in the text. "Sounding out" is not an end in itself, as in bottom-up approaches, but is utilized as an aid to making the best fit between the reader's cognitive structures and the cues of the text. The interactive model recognizes that simply understanding the context does not guarantee that readers will be able to identify the exact word in a passage correctly, rather than a synonym. Word attack skills must supplement context clues. In addition, written text does not necessarily replicate oral language structure; becoming literate entails acquiring new knowledge about the ways that language is presented in written form, integrating that with already existing oral language competence in order to use many context clues (Weber 1977b).

Current renewed emphasis on meaning reflects the increased application of schema theory to the field of reading in the last decade. Schema theory provides a theoretical framework that supports holistic rather than subskill approaches to reading while allowing for differences between child and adult learners. Schema theory claims that a person's existing knowledge, acquired through past experience, is "stored in memory in the form of abstract cognitive structures called schemata" (Hacker 1980, p. 867). Schemata can be embedded within each other, reflecting varying levels of detail and abstraction (Rumelhart 1981; Rumelhart and Ortony 1977). Hacker summarizes, "Comprehension involves the coordinated activity of schemata at all levels of the

hierarchy" (p. 867). Incoming information is matched against existing schemata as a reader uses the cues in the text and personal experience in order to create meaning or to comprehend the text.

Schema theory supports the interactive view of reading in which schemata are activated through both top-down and bottom-up processing. As Hacker explains, "Schema theory has as a fundamental assumption that spoken or written text does not in itself carry meaning. Rather, a text simply provides directions for listeners or readers as to how they should construct the intended meaning using their own, previously acquired knowledge" (p. 866). Skills that have been learned for decoding words or identifying whole words (bottom-up schemata) are used simultaneously with prior experience about the concepts in the text (top-down schemata) to construct the meaning of the text.

Schema theory places renewed emphasis on specific aspects of literacy instruction, such as "utilizing preexisting knowledge and experience of the reader, setting purposes for reading, and asking appropriate questions before and after reading" (Sheridan 1981, p. 69). Most important, it does not support the traditional subskill approach in which the text is more important than the reader's knowledge (Durkin 1981). Research with proficient adult readers appears to support the view that it is not necessary to identify every textual cue in order to comprehend the text and, in fact, that such an emphasis can hinder or interfere with becoming proficient readers. Mattran (1980) asserts that "traditionally, reading teachers working with adults have tried to teach too much, standing thus in the way of learning" (p. 163).

Schema theory is still just a theory, and research with adults on top-down and interactive models is still in its infancy. There is a great temptation simply to appropriate child-based research, but research such as that conducted by Malicky and Norman (1982) appears to support the contention that poor readers, whether they are adults or public school-aged youth, do not necessarily approach reading in the same way. Research with children appears to support the view that good readers are text based (Chall 1967). Research with adults learning to read shows that adult literacy students are more likely to approach reading through bottom-up approaches (Gambrell and Heathington 1981; Keefe and Meyer 1980); when reading is viewed as a process of creating meaning, however, students are more likely to progress and to learn at a faster rate (Boraks and Schumacher 1981; Malicky and Norman 1982).

Perhaps the most compelling argument for the interactive approach comes from case studies in which instructors document their success using this approach with students with whom they had been unsuccessful with traditional bottom-up approaches (e.g., Milligan 1982; Rigg and Taylor 1979). Rigg and Taylor comment, "We asked Renee to do what evidently she had seldom or never been asked to do in school: We asked her to read, and then we got out of her way and let her do it" (p. 56).

Reading researchers working with children and adults share the goal of illuminating the process of developing proficient reading skills, although the characteristics of adults and children differ. There is common ground here for increased professional dialogue between these two groups of researchers, which may result in a better overall understanding of the reading process.

Researchers working with children acknowledge that there is no specific approach that works with every student. Many adults in literacy programs failed to learn to read using subskill approaches in the public schools, so it is possible that illiterate adults are a kind of selected sample with characteristics that may vary from those of the population at large. Now that adult educators are becoming increasingly involved in reading research, it is possible to compare research findings and to design studies that explore the development of reading skills across differing populations.

It is clear from this discussion that reading will be facilitated by the extent to which readers already possess the cognitive structures necessary for interpreting the text. This perspective allows us to examine the work on different types of literacy in a new light. Sticht (1983) pioneered research in the military on reading in specific occupational contexts. He concludes that there are two primary types of reading: reading to learn and reading to do. Schooling tends to emphasize reading to learn, in which the reader must identify the context for comprehending the text and in which the information contained in text is to be applied at some later time, if at all. Occupations require reading to do, in which the context is already known and specific information is accessed through the application of literacy skills. Reading to learn is seen as requiring more complex information processing (Anderson 1981; Stiggins 1981). Schema theory supports the finding that adults with relatively low reading skills may successfully use materials written at a higher level due to extensive availability of cues that facilitate activating the appropriate schemata. Diehl and Mikulecky (1980) explain:

> In reading-to-do tasks, the reader has access to extralinguistic cues that are usually directly related to the reading material; a one-to-one correspondence often exists between aspects of the job environment . . . and the text. . . . [The] worker's main task is to understand the correspondence and use a combination of information from the text and from the environment to complete the task. The existence of an information-rich environment should enable workers to gain information from the text they would not have gained if they read the information in isolation. By using both textual and environmental cues, workers should be able to gain more information than their simple "reading ability" would suggest they could. (p. 225)

Schema theory supports approaches to literacy as a social construct. Meaning does not reside in the text, but is created by the reader, with the cues from the text, both contextual and graphic (letters and pictures). A serious analysis of the interactive approach leads to the question of the purposes of literacy programs and the characteristics of illiterate adults. As long as reading is seen as a series of discrete skills that can be taught in isolation and are not dependent upon comprehension of actual content, literacy programs can be conceptualized as simple skill-building efforts in which the cultural background of the learner is relatively irrelevant at the initial stages of reading instruction. However, when reading is perceived as the interaction between a learner's way of viewing the world and the cues in the text, then the learner's experiential base and approach to constructing meaning take on new significance.

Schema theory also helps us understand the dual nature of the reported consequences of literacy. On one level, literacy is functional; readers and writers can do things that nonreaders are unable to do. The demands on reading and writing skills have exploded in the 20th century, and as literacy has become integrated into mainstream American life, the number of people expected to be literate also has increased dramatically (Resnick and Resnick 1977). Our "information society" assumes that individuals are able to utilize and produce written communication.

There is another side to the consequences of literacy that has to do with the claims that the development of literacy has generalized intellectual and attitudinal effects. Literacy is credited with somehow transforming minds and creating the ability to think empathically, independently, and abstractly (Goody and Watt 1968; Olson 1977). Illiterate adults are seen not only as nonfunctional, but also as unable to take their place in society with the dignity accorded to all human beings. Although literacy educators strive to respect illiterate adults, the larger society still tends to equate illiteracy with more primitive cognitive abilities. These judgments often are internalized by illiterate adults, limiting their capacity for change (Eberle and Robinson 1980). The stigma of illiteracy and the mystique of literacy remain strong. Today, as Green (1980) describes with reference to schooling, the cultural liability of illiteracy outweighs even the extensive instrumental benefits of being able to read and write.

Study of the cognitive effects of literacy has suffered from the difficulty of separating the consequences of literacy from the broader influences of the schooling process within which literacy is acquired. Scribner and Cole's (1978; 1981) study of the Vai of Liberia is particularly interesting, therefore, because Vai adults develop literacy skills separately from the formal schooling process.

Scribner and Cole did not find the generalized intellectual effects claimed for literacy. They find that the difference between the cognitive performance of literate and illiterate adults differed specifically in relation to tasks similar to those for which literacy skills were applied. They also find that some illiterate adults completed the tasks as well as those who are literate, and some literate adults still had trouble with the test tasks. On the basis of their research findings, Scribner and Cole (1978) offer an alternative, functional theory of literacy:

> The literacy as development view would have us believe that literacy, in combination with schooling, produces generalized changes in the way people think. Our functional perspective suggests that the effects of literacy, and perhaps schooling as well, are restricted--perhaps to the practice actually engaged in or generalized only to closely related practices. (p. 457)

This does not mean that the effects associated with literacy in the United States are illusory. Rather, literacy by itself may not create increased empathy or the ability to think logically. However, when new readers are provided with a wide variety of reading materials and tasks--diverse practice over an extended period of time--then exposure to new ideas and skills may

indeed support changes in cognition and attitudes. When literacy is developed in social contexts in which reading material is scarce or rigidly censored or when opportunities for practicing reading skills are minimal, literacy skill acquisition may not result in noticeable attitudinal or cognitive change.

This is consistent with a schema-theoretic perspective. Specific literacy tasks will require the development of a related schema; this schema is, in turn, then available for use in nonliteracy tasks. Of course, the cognitive structures developed as a result of interaction with text can be developed in other ways also, supporting the evidence that illiterate adults may possess a wide range of cognitive abilities.

Becoming a skilled reader may mean the development of the ability to create contexts that are apart from daily interaction with the social world. This means that reading instruction must address broadening the learner's direct and indirect experiential base, introducing new ideas and concepts (Boraks and Richardson 1981). More broadly, literacy educators become agents of cultural change, assisting adults previously connected primarily to the real world of their experience to develop contexts quite removed from their direct experience of physical and social reality (Fingeret 1983b; Harman 1974).

Characteristics of Illiterate Adults and the Purposes of Literacy Programs

A third major issue underlying differences in literacy programs is the way literacy educators think about the characteristics of illiterate adults and the relationship between those characteristics and the purposes of literacy education. Characteristics are not merely objective descriptions of behaviors that are above personal biases or philosophical points of view. There are certain objective realities; it is their interpretation that is open to argument.

For example, illiterate adults often describe themselves as concerned about their ability to succeed in a literacy program. This usually is interpreted as a psychological characteristic labeled variously fear of failure or low self-esteem and is attributed to the individual. Weber (1977a) views behavior within the larger framework of a formal educational program and finds that "in [the formal] classrooms it is easy to maintain the unequal power relations between teacher and learner that nurture the stereotype of the adult literacy student as low in self-esteem, reluctant to take risks and concerned whether to use English correctly or not at all" (p. 246). Rather than viewing the observed behavior as a psychological characteristic, Weber sees it as created by the interaction between the characteristics of the situation and the learners.

Literacy educators have been influenced deeply by the perspective emerging from the War on Poverty in the 1960s, which portrayed individuals as embedded in a culture of poverty (Lewis 1959). The culture-of-poverty approach has been labeled a deficit perspective, in which middle-class culture is established as the norm and other cultures are judged against its characteristics.

The deficit perspective has been criticized extensively, but its prevalence in the literature is striking. Many authors cite the fact that illiterate adults bring a wealth of experience and a fully developed language system to the teaching-learning interaction; however, fear of failure, low self-esteem and self-confidence, resistance to change and lack of future orientation, inarticulateness, fatalism, inability to cope or to think abstractly, and apathy of illiterate adults are mentioned much more often. The disadvantaged are portrayed as poor financial planners, parents, housekeepers, friends, and spouses.

Literacy programs designed to serve adults who are viewed through the deficit model emphasize teaching illiterate adults the "correct" cultural norms. According to Jones (1972), cited in Thompson (1980), "The language of 'personal deficit,' 'affliction' and the need for 'treatment' to 'rehabilitate' the 'malfunctioning' adult into 'normal' society runs like a medical checklist through the literature. The tone is one of mission and concern for the less fortunate, in areas in which the distinctions between therapeutic, educational and welfare needs become very difficult to establish" (p. 87). Personal development and separation from one's "negative" culture are emphasized.

Some educators have claimed that illiteracy is the result of social structural inequities and class discrimination. Schooling was not provided, was of inferior quality, or simply was unresponsive to the cultural characteristics of children who differed from the middle class. The specific characteristics of illiterate adults become inconsequential in this primarily structural analysis, and literacy programs are created to increase access to educational opportunities. Individuals are not responsible for their illiteracy. If the culture-of-poverty model is seen as laying all of the responsibility for illiteracy at the feet of the illiterate adults, this model represents a swing to the other end of the continuum, where the larger society is seen as fully responsible.

Disadvantage certainly exists in modern American society; there is an unequal distribution of opportunity, power, and resources. Many illiterate adults also are poor and must deal with both increased levels of stress (Brown 1977) and physiological complications from inadequate nutrition that influence their ability to learn. Literacy educators in the past worked from the information available at the time, but now they appear to be recognizing that simple explanations and one-dimensional models of illiteracy or poverty do not suffice. Jones (1981) writes: "It is dangerous and misleading . . . to view the disadvantaged entirely from a deficit perspective. Although supporting research is limited at best, there are indications that many disadvantaged persons are more purposeful than most of the earlier deficit-oriented literature suggested" (pp. 51-2).

It is difficult to develop a model that combines a nondeficit view of illiterate adults and an understanding of illiteracy as the result of the interaction between structural and cultural factors. As Hunter and Harman (1979) comment:

> Those of us who prepare studies about disadvantaged people run the risk of perpetuating stereotypes. We tend to simplify complex lives into cases to be analyzed, or problems that need solutions, or statistics to be studied. This tendency, and our inability to interpret with understanding the first-hand information that people give us about their aspirations and their lives, are serious blind spots. (p. 55)

Alternatives are beginning to emerge in the literature, particularly as illiterate adults themselves are provided with an opportunity to share their perspectives through qualitative studies. Eberle and Robinson (1930) present extensive interview data in which illiterate adults describe the myths and the realities of illiteracy in contemporary American life. Sisco (1983) points to evidence that many adults who may have little or no schooling have nonetheless educated themselves through their life experiences. Brockett (1983) raises questions about possible cultural bias in research instruments used to measure illiterate adults' abilities to learn. Fitzgerald (1984) suggests that the lack of motivation attributed to illiterate adults who do not enroll in literacy programs may be due to the fact that many illiterate adults do not believe that literacy will solve their problems.

Fingeret (1982) presents interview data in which illiterate adults describe their frustrations with the attitudes of educators and discuss their own aspirations and accomplishments. Fingeret argues that illiterate adults should be seen as members of oral subcultures, with their own set of values and beliefs, rather than as failing members of the dominant literate culture. She finds that illiterate adults see themselves, often, as interdependent, rather than dependent, sharing their skills and knowledge with members of their social networks in return for access to the reading and writing skills of friends, neighbors, and relatives. In addition, Fingeret claims that many illiterate adults possess common sense, an ability to abstract and analyze that often is downgraded by the larger society in favor of more scientific deductive logic.

When illiterate adults are seen as participating in some alternative culture in which literacy is not as central as it is to the dominant culture, the causes of illiteracy are culturally related, but not necessarily because the alternative culture is bad. This view respects the dignity and power of individuals through whose eyes the culture is viewed. It also must be recognized that the development of an alternative culture is the result of interaction with the larger society that may be structured to deny opportunities to those who differ from the middle class. When the problem is conceptualized as this kind of interaction between structural and cultural factors, the programmatic response combines developing critical awareness of these social and political realities on the part of the illiterate adults (empowerment) and working together with them to bring about political and social change.

The roles of literacy educators correspond to the broader notions of the purposes of literacy education. In empowerment and social change models the educator is depicted as a facilitator and change agent; in personal development models the educator is depicted as an instructor and counselor. The educator may be viewed as a representative of the status quo and an implementer of social policy or as a participant, with students, in the creation of new

social relationships. Literacy education is portrayed by some as an apolitical process and by others as a highly politicized endeavor. Clearly, literacy education involves influencing the relationship between the individual and society. Paulo Freire (1970), an influential philosopher of literacy education, stresses that education is a political act regardless of an individual's willingness to admit the fact.

Conclusion

The discussion of issues presented in this section has been vastly oversimplified in an effort to present the range of the spectrum of views and is not intended to be inclusive of the many positions between the extremes presented. There appear to be a finite number of ways that the views presented here are combined in American literacy programs, although there is great diversity within each type of program. Administrators and instructors are not necessarily aware of their assumptions and beliefs regarding the nature of literacy, the characteristics of illiterate adults, the purposes of literacy education, or the nature of the reading process. Nonetheless, these themes provide a useful framework for understanding an otherwise confusing array of approaches to adult literacy education in the United States.

PROGRAM MODELS

One way to approach analyzing American adult literacy education is to separate those programs oriented to serving the individual in isolation from those working with communities. This distinction is particularly important because a number of authors have called for additional community-based efforts (e.g., Hunter and Harman 1979). Of course, individuals cannot be separated completely from their communities, but program models emphasize one or the other orientation.

The term community based ordinarily is used to differentiate these programs from those primarily dedicated to serving individuals separately from their community contexts. This term is problematic, since it also is used to describe programs that may be individually oriented but are located in community settings. Therefore, the term community oriented is used whenever possible to assist in the recognition that the actual location of the program is not the factor that discriminates between the two types of programs. The literature from which information about community-oriented programs is drawn refers to these programs as "community-based," "liberatory," or "empowering."

In this section American policy concerning adult literacy education is reviewed briefly in order to provide a context for understanding the predominance of individually oriented programs in the United States. Then the distinction between individually oriented and community-oriented programs is described. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of literacy campaigns, popular in other parts of the world but not presently used in the United States.

American Policy

American policy on adult literacy is most clearly seen in the Federal adult basic education (ABE) legislation. Federally funded adult literacy education is a modern phenomenon; ABE was initiated as part of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 and was transferred into the Office of Education in 1966. ABE was designed for those adults 16 years of age and older who had completed less than 12 years of school and currently were not enrolled in public schools. Federal funding is allocated to individual States which, in turn, appropriate to local programs. Every State uses a preexisting educational system--the public schools, the community colleges, or some combination--for the majority of its program sites. In addition, some ABE funds are awarded to programs in other settings, such as community organizations, libraries, or volunteer efforts.

The wording of the Adult Education Act of 1966 reflects an expectation that literacy will directly affect the ability of adults to secure employment and thereby become more productive citizens. Darkenwald and Valentine (1984) comment that the Adult Education Act's "official goals are narrowly utilitarian. The bottom line is employment and adult education is seen not as a right or end in itself, but as a means for training adults to get and keep jobs" (p. 92). Policy is predicated on the assumption that literacy is a set of skills, that illiteracy is a cause of many of the problems encountered by poor or minority persons, and that individual intervention, in the form of literacy instruction, can change an individual's socioeconomic and cultural status. Furthermore, National ABE program goals imply that all adults should be literate in order to function as productive members of the society; the Right to Read program, funded in 1971, was supposed to "eradicate illiteracy" in the decade.

American literacy education policy often is described in terms of an economic model in which legislators expect a return for their investment such as lower levels of dependency on welfare and higher rates of employment. This reflects a certain naivete about the causes of unemployment and the functioning of the welfare system, both of which can be viewed as social control mechanisms operating relatively independently of literacy skills (see, for example, Piven and Cloward's [1971] analysis). It has been argued that as literacy levels increase, the norm is raised and those in the lowest positions in the hierarchy remain in those positions (Collins 1979). Although the deterministic character of this view of schooling and society obscures the fact of individual potency, it nonetheless illuminates the simplistic nature of the reasoning underlying purely economic analyses of literacy education.

The ABE program has been an important force in American adult literacy education, but it has not been able to achieve its public objectives. As Hunter and Harman (1979) summarize:

> Publicly proclaimed program goals and actual achievements are far apart. The "inability to get or retain employment" will not be eliminated for adult basic education (ABE) participants. Illiteracy will not be "defeated in ten years" by the Right to Read program. Such goals are rhetoric designed to secure legislation and funding from a Congress that knows little about its educationally and economically marginal constituents. (p. 57)

In practice, the mandate of the Adult Education Act has been interpreted very broadly by the States as well as the Federal Government (Darkenwald and Valentine 1984), deemphasizing employment gains as evaluation criteria to some extent. However, Drennan (1980) asserts that "adult educators have tended to believe that the disparate scales of living in this country originate in income difference" (p. 98). Thus, it is important to recognize that the effects of Federal legislation are related to the interaction between the educators' beliefs and the act's specific provisions and regulations.

The current Federal administration has initiated a National Adult Literacy Project and is advocating volunteer efforts in adult literacy education, although it is not providing additional resources for the program support

services essential for effective training and use of volunteers. This not only reflects a misconception about volunteer programs, but it also reflects a deeper ambivalence about the role of the Federal Government in relation to adult literacy education efforts. Americans historically have been willing volunteers; Federal literacy initiatives encouraging volunteerism without additional support structures become empty rhetoric. International acceptance of a major role for literacy volunteers rather than funded professional staff may be seen as evidence of the widespread marginal status of adult literacy education (Unesco 1983).

Volunteer programs, contrary to popular notions, are not free; that is, although services are free for clients, programs still represent allocations of the scarce resources of time, personal energy, and material goods. In addition, money or in-kind donations must be found for rent, materials, duplicating, utility bills, transportation, and other costs. Effective volunteer programs seem to require professional-level management skills (e.g., Ilsley and Niemi 1982; Wilson 1976). However, research on volunteerism has not addressed the extent to which such skills tend to be volunteered. The Federal administration appears to assume that widespread voluntary efforts can be effective without monetary support for supervision and administration; this has not been investigated. As a matter of fact, research on volunteerism generally tends to focus on the volunteer rather than on the relationship between volunteers and the programmatic context. Additional research is desperately needed.

Federal policy also is supporting the increased involvement of the private sector in adult literacy education. This appears to be resulting in some new sources of funding (e.g., B. Dalton Booksellers), as well as an increased emphasis on developing literacy skills within workplaces. The latter focus is most useful, of course, to those adults already employed, although it may lead to increasing employment opportunities for adults with low reading skill levels.

It is still too early to assess any results of the current National adult literacy education emphasis. It appears that the program's rhetoric is consistent with the individualistic and employment-related policy directions of the past. However, it is possible that literacy educators, when provided with some new resources, however limited, may move in directions other than those anticipated in Washington.

Individually Oriented Programs

Individually oriented programs tend to approach literacy as the primary focus of instruction and to be oriented to "mainstreaming" the individual into middle-class society. Instructional materials may address housing, employment, or other life issues, but the content is secondary to teaching reading skills. Individually oriented programs may be located in a community center rather than a formal educational institution, but they do not necessarily become involved in the issues facing the students' community except as a matter of personal assistance or counseling for the student. ABE and National volunteer literacy programs, such as Laubach Literacy Advance (LLA) and

Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA) usually are individually oriented. In addition, many programs that describe themselves as community-based organizations (CBOs) also are individually oriented, although their primary location may be in the community.

ABE programs are represented in the literature base more extensively than any other programs. This probably occurs for a number of reasons: they are the largest network of literacy education providers; special projects funded through section 310 of the Adult Education Act produce reports every year that are incorporated into the ERIC system regularly; the Federal Government requires a certain amount of reporting and those data are then available for other publication uses; and ABE State systems provide accessible sources of data for a wide range of academic research purposes. Most of this extensive literature base, however, is based upon the perceptions and analyses of program instructors and administrators; with notable exceptions the views of program participants are largely absent from the literature.

Enrollment in ABE consistently has increased since the mid-1960s, but still represents only 2 to 4 percent of the total number of American adults for whom the program was created (Hunter and Harman 1979). ABE programs have been described as a "creaming operation" (Mezirow, Darkenwald, and Knox 1975), attracting those who are most similar to the middle-class adults who operate and teach in most of the programs. Although ABE and volunteer programs suffer from many problems, they provide generally accessible literacy instruction in areas in which, 20 years ago, no such resources existed. They have assisted many adults in improving their reading skills, and they have encouraged the development of research activity and publishing in adult literacy education. They appear to be meeting the needs of illiterate adults who are willing and able to reach out and take advantage of the opportunities offered.

The widely disseminated literature, however, does not tell the entire story of ABE. State directors of ABE and local program administrators who are engaging in innovative activities often feel the classic tension between doing and writing, particularly in these times of somewhat accelerated interest in adult literacy education. The internal program documents solicited for this study show evidence of increasing concern for development of new approaches to instruction, staff development, curriculum development, and evaluation. A number of State ABE directors are questioning the ground rules upon which ABE has developed over the past two decades, including the orientation to working with individuals (e.g., Lowe and Jones 1983).

There are many literacy programs that exist in specialized contexts, such as libraries, or programs that serve special populations, such as prison inmates. These programs often are funded, partly by ABE, or are sponsored by a local LVA or LLA affiliate. They also approach literacy from an individual standpoint, isolating literacy skill acquisition from other issues that clients may be facing and facilitating the movement of individuals into the larger society.

Individually oriented programs do not exist in a vacuum; although they do not become involved in the problems of the community, they are concerned about meeting the complex, interrelated needs of the individuals they serve. They

also understand that student recruitment depends upon the program's credibility in the community, to some extent, as do access to facilities and provision of public services that can facilitate attendance, such as regular bus service.

Programs create linkages, therefore, with other local agencies and institutions that can serve as sources of students, related services for students (such as legal assistance or personal counseling), instructors, or other resources such as funding, books, or volunteers. To some extent, linkages must be mutually satisfying relationships through which the needs of both the linking agency and the literacy program are met. This can lead to problems when the literacy program is unwilling or unable to pay the price or when the organizations have conflicting philosophies or communicate inconsistent messages to students (Beder and Smith 1977).

Most American programs are individually oriented, corresponding to the legislative emphasis on improving individuals' circumstances. This may be understood in terms of Americans' historical focus on individual achievement, but it also reflects many years of widespread compulsory public schooling. It is expected that illiterate adults are the exception rather than the rule and that adult literacy education offers them a second chance. Community-oriented programs are more widespread in nations in which there has not been widespread public schooling available and in which collective action is deemed necessary for the broader goals of national development.

Community-oriented Programs

A second major approach to literacy education, based upon a different set of assumptions, values, and beliefs, coexists with individually oriented efforts. Literacy education is offered as one aspect of the services of numerous independent community-based, organized, and controlled agencies throughout the country that provide assistance with specific problem areas identified by members of the communities. These include agencies geared to the needs of specific ethnic and cultural groups and to groups of persons sharing concerns such as improved health care or housing. Individually oriented programs tend to reach the most mobile illiterate adults; community-oriented literacy programs claim to reach the most economically poor and in need, those not currently served in large numbers by ABE.

Community-oriented programs are more likely to be advocates of social change, facilitating efforts of individuals to address broad community concerns and teaching literacy skills as necessary to assist the larger process of change. Community-oriented programs invest in learning about the issues confronting the members of the community and involve community members in roles that often challenge traditional views of the distinctions between professional and lay person. Functional literacy is defined by the community's reality; reading is secondary to developing an understanding of social forces and a belief in cooperative effort and the possibility of change. Community-oriented literacy efforts are represented in the American adult literacy education literature base to a meager extent, although they are prevalent in the international literature.

Organizations differ in their understanding and definition of a community orientation, but all share an emphasis on working with a specific group to meet its needs (Association for Community Based Education 1983) or a concurrent focus on individual and community development (Villa n.d.). Rather than operating to transmit the knowledge of the dominant culture, community-oriented organizations "work actively for rediscovery and integration of the community's own culture, and ultimately for the creation of a new vitality, a new direction, and a new sense of self-determination within the community" (ibid., p. iii).

Community-oriented organizations are commited to empowerment, or increasing the ability of persons and groups to control their lives. They advocate working through the democratic process to affect the forces that create barriers to control while not oppressing others in the process. Rosenman (n.d.) explains:

> Community [oriented] organizations are usually composed of economically poor people who understand that things will never get appreciably better as long as they and their neighbors try to make it out of poverty one at a time, scrambling over the backs of one another for the few opportunities available to the most competitive among them. They have come together to work together in an effort to improve conditions for all of them, for their entire community. (p. 6)

Individually oriented programs also are concerned with empowering illiterate adults; the difference lies in advocacy of collective (rather than individual) action for community (instead of primarily individual) development.

Community-oriented literacy programs are also concerned about linking to other agencies as well as offering a wide range of services themselves. These may include courses in nutrition, getting and keeping a job, leadership, parenting, and community change as well as counseling, discussion groups, and other support activities (Association for Community Based Education 1983). Services and activities may not appear directly connected to literacy at first glance, although reading skills may be taught within a variety of contexts, and the motivation for participation in literacy education may develop as a result of developing interest in numerous areas (leadership, for example). Programming requires a kind of flexibility that may conflict with the guidelines of Federal funding agencies or nationally sponsored programs. As a result, institutional independence has been identified as a desirable characteristic by community-oriented program personnel (ibid.) even though they often receive funds from a wide range of institutional sources.

The concept of community is fundamental to understanding community-oriented education. Unfortunately, it rarely is carefully defined. Brookfield (1984), in a thoughtful review of the field of community education, comments:

> The word "community" is one which has the power to inspire a reverential suspension of critical judgement in the minds of adult educators, social workers and those within the caring and health professions. It is as if in invoking this term adult educators thereby imbue their practice with a

humanistic concern and an almost self-righteous compassion which pre-empts any considered analysis of its central features. (p. 60)

Brookfield emphasizes a useful distinction between "liberal" and "liberating" community education. Educators who emphasize the harmonious aspects of community and who strive to meet the needs of all community members are engaged in liberal community education. On the other hand, liberating community educators, which describes the use of the term community-oriented educators in this paper, emphasize "the existence of inequities in terms of income, access to educational opportunity, and political power" (ibid., pp. 68-69). They understand that responding to one sector of the community may entail ignoring or even actively opposing another. Liberating community educators admit that "educators [are] . . . political creatures who are faced constantly with the need to make choices regarding the allocation of resources and whose choices reflect personal biases or institutional preferences" (ibid., p. 69).

Community-oriented literacy programs often present their work using broad, sweeping language rather than critically analyzing their processes, problems, and achievements. Brookfield's recent work, although encompassing the much larger field of community education, nonetheless is quite useful for its thoughtful consideration of the ethical and political issues confronting all educators but too often left unexplored.

Campaigns

It is important to note that both models described in previous sections are ongoing programs; they are developed to operate continuously as long as funds and the need continue to exist. Literacy campaigns, not utilized in the United States, are intensive large-scale efforts conducted in finite, prespecified time frames, such as the campaigns in Cuba and Nicaragua (Bhola 1982). National literacy campaigns often are used to develop a sense of nationhood, to instill local pride, and to contribute to larger goals of economic and social development, in addition to teaching literacy skills. Materials often are overtly ideological, and broad governmental support is provided intensively for the prescribed period of time. Mass literacy campaigns characteristically involve a mobilization of many segments of the society to provide and coordinate instructors, materials, preparatory and follow-up support and training, facilities, transportation, and students.

Campaigns are most often conducted in societies in which there has not been broad provision of public elementary schooling, so the campaign may be the first time many adults have had the opportunity to learn to read. Illiteracy is seen as the result of oppressive social structures, and structural interventions, such as creating access to a volunteer tutor, seem appropriate. Very different circumstances exist in nations such as the United States, which have provided large-scale public schooling for many years and in which illiteracy is viewed as an individual's problem rather than as a socially created condition. The instructional materials created for campaigns appeal to broad national social change objectives shared by members of the society; in the United States, literacy programs must address the immediate local concerns of adults. In addition, campaigns often are justified in terms of the presumed

causal relationship between literacy and National economic development, although evidence of causality is not at all conclusive (Harman 1974; Unesco 1983). Developed nations, while concerned about continued economic development, already have a majority of literate workers upon which to draw.

Kozol (1980), however, has become an advocate of the campaign strategy in the United States. After traveling to Cuba and studying its literacy campaign extensively, he describes current American literacy efforts as a "piecemeal, low-key, unprovocative, non-controversial, and generally ineffective program, one which is begun in generosity, carried out in condescension, and concluded in benign defeat" (p. 34). Kozol claims that the United States needs a mass mobilization, on "war footing," outside the bounds of existing funding guidelines. Kozol's call for an American literacy campaign reflects feelings shared with many literacy educators that National resources have not been marshalled seriously to confront the problem of illiteracy in the United States. His work has contributed to sensitizing educators and the general public about the existence of illiteracy in America and the limited impact of existing Federal programs.

Kozol's plan, however, suffers from the same weaknesses afflicting many campaign strategies that assume that eradicating illiteracy is a concrete, finite task, rather than recognizing that the culturally and historically relative nature of literacy implies that it is constantly created anew as the demands of society change. His plan also does not confront some of the important differences between the American situation and the conditions existing in Third World nations that have conducted literacy campaigns. Kozol's plan may underestimate the complex nature of illiteracy in the United States; a multitude of small, locally operated programs may be more appropriate than a centralized, large-scale crusade.

PROGRAM ASPECTS

Community-oriented and individually oriented adult literacy programs often appear to approach their tasks quite differently. This can be traced to differences in their underlying beliefs about the nature of illiteracy, the characteristics of illiterate adults, the reading process, the purposes of literacy education, and the roles of literacy educators. A number of program aspects are examined in this section, including planning and evaluation, instructors and their roles, instructional approaches and the curriculum, instructional methods, and materials.

It should be remembered that much more information is available about the practices of individually oriented programs than is available about other programs. Community-oriented programs have maintained a distance from many formal institutions, such as universities, that are responsible for conducting many of the research studies found in the literature. They also have not had the funding sources that are available to State ABE offices to commission research, nor have they been responsible for reporting aggregate program data to some central office.

Planning and Evaluation

Individually Oriented Programs

Individually oriented literacy programs approach planning as a technical activity involving the systematic analysis of a situation and application of resources. The program planning process usually begins by conducting a needs assessment. Definitions of functional literacy such as that offered by Hunter and Harman (1979) appear to imply that needs are defined within specific community contexts by persons living in those communities. As discussed earlier, this poses problems for quantitative accountability systems. The need for literacy education is considered self-evident in the larger societal context, so the task of program planners often becomes one of documenting this need, frequently by consulting local census figures. Program goals are developed in terms of numbers of adults to be served and an expected amount of reading skill development or APL competency attainment within a specified time frame.

Literacy educators who engage in this kind of needs assessment often are beginning from a deficit perspective and do not believe that potential clients are capable of identifying their needs or participating in the process of building a program. Need is treated as a fact rather than as a value judgment (Monette 1977, 1979). This tendency has been decried by such writers as O'Brien (1979):

> The acceptance by educators in ABE of outer imposed normative statements used as program goals, in place of a sophisticated needs assessment from the local target population is surprising in light of the usual tendency of educators to bristle at the idea of pre-established course content. . . . Students in the majority of existing [ABE] programs are being trained to fulfill institutional or societal needs rather than being freed to assess their own needs and aspirations. (p. 36)

Other literacy educators believe that individual goals are important and that externally imposed standards such as the APL competencies are of limited usefulness. In some cases (such as California), statewide competency surveys have been conducted rather than simply adopting the National APL list. This practice does not address differing functional uses of literacy in varied community contexts, however. On another level, many instructors and administrators in individually oriented programs maintain that the individual's goals, in the end, are most important. Program administrators consider their programs successful if students are meeting their own objectives.

This kind of dual set of objectives--public quantitative and private student-centered goals--presents problems for program evaluation. Students' aspirations or goals are not ordinarily included in centralized record-keeping systems. Students' goals are not necessarily the same as those legislatively mandated and easily quantified (such as increased employment, decreased dependence on welfare, etc.). In addition, as with any educational program, the impact of program participation may not be visible for some period of time after a student leaves the program, and program responsibility for individual change cannot be isolated reliably from a variety of other factors. Most important, many of the outcomes reported by individually oriented programs, such as increased self-worth, are not quantifiable.

Program evaluation has been the topic of numerous publications but has suffered from methodological problems and an underrepresentation of the perspective of students. Darkenwald and Valentine (1984), following a thorough examination of existing ABE impact studies, conclude: "The quality of much of the research limits the credibility and generalizability of the findings. Few studies were designed or implemented with enough care to obtain accurate information on all important changes which could be directly attributed to ABE" (p. 17). Darkenwald and Valentine offer suggestions for state-centralized student follow-up studies as well as a sophisticated study of ABE outcomes and impacts in New Jersey. One of their major contributions is the use of content analysis techniques in which they ask open-ended interview questions and then code the responses.

Despite data collection and analysis problems, many States publish data regarding the numbers of ABE participants who obtained new employment or decreased their dependence upon the public welfare system. Darkenwald and Valentine point out that such data are difficult to assess without knowing how many students desired or needed new jobs, for example. "Enhanced feelings of self-worth," the most prevalent finding of outcome studies, can lead indirectly to securing a new job, but this connection is difficult to document. In addition, when literacy plays a minimal role in work environments and few

employment alternatives are available in the area, literacy education will not bring about increased employment (King 1979).

Outcome studies have not been particularly useful for providing guidance about future directions for program development. They tend to be set up to measure the extent to which goals have been met, rather than to question the goals themselves. Studies of individually oriented adult literacy programs traditionally conclude that students leave without accomplishing their goals due to factors beyond the control of the instructors or program administrators. This research conclusion always has been questionable (e.g., Seaman 1971), and recent research finds that students' dissatisfaction with aspects of the program does appear to contribute to dropout rates (Darkenwald and Valentine 1984; Fingeret 1982; Fitzgerald 1984).

Community-oriented Programs

Community-oriented organizations often reject the mainstream technological approach to program planning. Needs are not assumed on the basis of statistical evidence and societal norms. Community-oriented program planning does not focus on provision of literacy education alone; literacy skills are analyzed within the specific community setting, and program staff may function as advocates as well as facilitators of learning. Program outcomes are important, but the collaborative process between educators and community members is paramount. The system within which individually oriented programs operate, "requires behavioral objectives, quantifiable results, and ultimately the commodification of knowledge--the marketing of knowledge in modules and prepackaged materials for mass markets. . . . Such an economy is poorly suited to empowering the poor and uneducated to change their world," claims Heaney (1983, pp. 37-38). Heaney describes the alternative strategy used in community-oriented programs: "No expert or technician plans the sequenced events that build a curriculum. Events happen, not by chance or with mindless abandon, but they happen as a result of the unanticipated order imposed by the community itself as the community begins to reflect on and eventually create its own history" (p. 38).

Hunter and Harman (1979) review a number of community-oriented literacy efforts, commending their ability to work with those who are the most poor and uninterested in individually oriented ABE programs. These authors call for the development of additional community-oriented literacy efforts throughout the United States in order to involve increased numbers of adults in literacy education.

Community-oriented literacy programs claim that their broad, collaborative approach contributes to their ability to work successfully with those persons who do not participate in traditional ABE programs. "It is the total mix of program activities--not the literacy classes alone--that can enable participants to break the bonds of illiteracy and become functioning, productive members of society" (Association for Community Based Education 1983, p. 25). These views cannot be dismissed as purely ideologically based; research supports the view that economic and social needs are more immediately important than educational needs for poor illiterate adults (Dobbs 1980; Fitzgerald 1984).

The literature base on community-oriented adult literacy programs is sparse and is not integrated into the large ABE-generated literature base. The politicized perspective of community-oriented adult literacy programs differs substantially from that found in the bulk of the ABE literature. Although community-oriented programs claim effectiveness, research is limited and program reports are not widely disseminated. Newsletters such as The Ladder (PLAN) are more viable means of communication than are more academic journals. Community-oriented adult literacy programs are minimally connected to the adult literacy education bureaucracy in the United States, while they appear to meet the needs of truly poor adults largely unrepresented in ABE and National volunteer efforts.

Many questions remain about community-oriented literacy efforts. Community education has a long history as a topic in adult education literature, but the use of the term community often is not clear (see Brookfield 1983, 1984), and the term community based is used to mean many different things. Community-oriented programs, in the sense used in this monograph, often are described without a specific focus on literacy. In addition, descriptions of specific instructional and programming strategies have a tendency to be replaced with general terminology about development, growth, and empowerment. Claims for the effectiveness of community-oriented efforts often appear to be more philosophically and ideologically grounded than developed through systematic inquiry. Wholesale rejection of the technology of traditional educators may result in limiting programs' ability to change and to increase their effectiveness. Community-oriented literacy educators appear to be just beginning to confront the difficult questions about appropriating the technology of mainstream education for their own uses.

Instructors

Individually Oriented Programs

The majority of ABE instructors are employed part-time in adult literacy education (Young et al. 1980), usually with little or no formal training in adult literacy instruction prior to their employment and with few career tracks available for them that might encourage or reward taking the initiative for procuring additional training (Mezirow, Darkenwald, and Knox 1975). They are expected to be organizers, recruiters, counselors, and diagnosticians as well as researchers, curriculum developers, and, of course, literacy instructors (Mattran 1977; Ulmer 1980). There is little written about how it feels to be faced with the multitude of competing demands confronting ABE instructors daily. With some notable exceptions (e.g., Prey 1981), there is little critical discussion about the role definitions and characteristics of ABE instructors. Articles attempt to list competencies or identify responsibilities without exploring the larger normative framework.

Adult literacy instructors tend to be chosen for their characteristics as concerned, caring individuals more than for specific instructional skill or training. The lack of formal training in teaching reading is of concern to the teachers themselves, as well as to others (Cranney 1983). As Ulmer (1980)

reflects, "Experience has taught continuing educators that placing an enthusiastic, caring teacher in the classroom will not, in itself, produce desired results" (p. 10).

Many States have used ABE special projects funds to develop staff development and training programs (Parker n.d.b). Although funding has decreased in the last couple of years (Parker n.d.a), there now exist a multitude of local, statewide, and regional staff development, inservice, and preservice training programs in addition to the National Laubach and LVA training programs and a small number of graduate education specialization programs. With some exceptions (e.g., Irish 1979), most training appears to be oriented to providing specific skills and knowledge rather than to involving instructors in the larger debates in the field or emphasizing theoretical perspectives.

Research in instructor training has emphasized the structural organization of training rather than the content or the process. Research on instructors has focused on areas such as ideal competencies (e.g., Fellenz 1981) without addressing the value judgments implicit in the notion of a "good" teacher. Studies of the outcomes of training raise serious questions about the extent of content learning, even when participants are enthusiastically positive about the session (e.g., Jones and Bolton 1981). Research that has attempted to judge relationships between training and teaching effectiveness has not been conclusive; in fact, at times questions are raised as to whether training may negatively influence teacher effectiveness (Hoffman 1980).

Some researchers infer that more sophisticated training is necessary, such as that provided in graduate education programs (Smith, Palmer, and Evanson 1979). However, the lack of research clearly showing training to be useful is so striking that it must be taken as a signal that it is time to reevaluate the field's approach to the entire area. The lack of documentation that training influences practice in a positive manner could be used as support for discontinuing training; more likely, however, it is an indicator that the appropriate content, purposes, or processes for useful training are not yet known. Training for instructors may show enhanced effectiveness when it is reconceptualized within a broader process of overall program review.

Community-oriented Programs

Instructors' roles in community-oriented programs appear to emphasize group facilitation skills more than the individual instruction skills valued by individually oriented programs. There appears to be a similar diversity of responsibilities, but oriented to community development rather than simply to individual goal attainment. The specific characteristics of instructors or facilitators is not clearly documented, nor is the proportion of part-time to full-time program staff. Community-oriented programs value community knowledge, background, and experience in addition to the sensitivity and concern valued by individually oriented programs (Association for Community Based Education 1983).

Community-oriented literacy programs also provide diverse training opportunities for staff members. Traditional pedagogical training does not prepare

teachers to function as facilitators and advocates; community-oriented programs have found that they sometimes must assist new staff to unlearn their formal training. The Association for Commmunity Based Education study reports training efforts as they were reported by the programs, but no formal research studies of the effectiveness of training in community-oriented program settings could be identified (ibid.).

Although use of community personnel is important to community-oriented programs, there is little discussion of the relationships between professional educators and community residents. There also is an unstated assumption that community membership implies a host of other characteristics, such as a shared experiential and language background with the illiterate adults of the community. Community-oriented educators need to articulate some of their underlying assumptions and to unveil the details of some of their processes in order for others to build upon their experience.

Instructional Approaches and the Curriculum

Individually Oriented Programs

Individually oriented programs traditionally have focused on teaching the basic skills of reading, writing, and computing, embedding the skills in content that has been chosen by instructors, administrators, or textbook publishers on the basis of its presumed relevance to students. Thompson (1983) comments:

> The curriculum for the disadvantaged is always remedial, always basic, and always dealing in the kind of low status learning that middle class students would find insulting. So often the term "coping skills" is used; indeed, the knowledge offered to disadvantaged groups mostly concerned with learning to cope with, and to put up with, to come to terms with, unsatisfactory circumstances, and to learn the rules as laid down by the middle class. (pp. 44-45)

An emphasis on coping skills and survival literacy in the 1970s largely has been replaced today with a focus on competency-based adult education (CBAE) resulting from the Adult Performance Level (APL) Study in the mid-1970s. Competency-based education has a long history (Taylor 1979), although many adult basic educators embrace it as a new way of combining skills development and the context of skills application. The APL project developed a grid identifying specific knowledge areas, such as consumerism, civic knowledge, and occupational knowledge, which intersect with skill areas to create the framework for curriculum development.

The APL project appears to have contributed significantly to raising the awareness of adult literacy educators about the importance of teaching literacy skills in a meaningful context. Its influence has encouraged textbook publishers to move away from phonics skills drills with words presented in isolation and to develop materials in which context plays an important role. However, the APL materials present their research base in a way that obscures the value position underlying their orientation and "may have lured uncritical

ABE personnel into believing the approach is entirely objective and value-free" (Griffith and Cervero 1977, p. 221).

The competency-based movement in adult literacy education is an interesting phenomenon. It appears to have developed passionate followers and equally passionate critics. The editors of the Adult Education Quarterly published a series of articles and reactions about CBAE between 1983 and 1984 (Collins 1983, 1984; Parker 1984; Ratcliff 1984). Unfortunately, the authors do little to grapple seriously with issues confronting CBAE enthusiasts; primarily they reinforce a sense of lines drawn for battle.

One of the issues raised in the series is the distinction between APL as a curriculum--a list of competencies to be achieved--and CBAE as an educational process. Although described as learner centered, competency-based programs often utilize commercially produced materials based upon a set of normative competencies, particularly those produced by the APL study. The curriculum of CBAE does not necessarily have to correspond to the APL competencies, however; students and instructors may negotiate which competencies are most appropriate. In addition, competency may be developed by students in any number of ways, and success may be evaluated similarly in a number of ways. These points are very important for understanding CBAE, but their implications for practice are not widely addressed in the literature. (See Irish 1980a for a short discussion of some of these points.)

Research on competency-based education tends to compare outcomes with those of traditional basic skills curricula, concluding that student learning was at least equivalent and that development of attributes such as self-confidence was more enhanced through competency-based education. These studies do not examine or describe the so-called traditional approaches, nor do they examine the processes through which the competencies in question were developed, taught, or evaluated. In addition, there is a possibility of bias in the testing instruments that may have been geared to the competency-based curriculum.

The underlying issues are the importance of teaching reading using meaningful context rather than isolated word lists and the need for some negotiated accountability system that responds both to funding sources as well as to student goals. Competency-based education appears to have the potential to assist in addressing these issues, as long as it does not become an end in itself rather than a means toward specific--and limited--objectives. Increased self-worth, so highly valued by ABE program participants, cannot be reduced to a set of competencies. Meeting skill and information learning needs, however, may be facilitated through the use of competency-based education.

If competency-based education is to develop its positive potential rather than the negative characteristics such as excessive reductionism and determinism described by Collins (1983), then its proponents must engage in thoughtful, probing analysis. There must be a willingness to accept that CBAE will not meet all of their objectives and expectations; no single system can be everything to everybody and retain the flexibility and responsiveness crucial to adult literacy education efforts. In addition to more sophisticated

research, informal reports of CBAE in practice are needed to illuminate the relationship between existing theory and program realities. For example, although competence may be developed and evaluated in any number of ways theoretically, it is not clear that literacy programs have the resources or that staff have the training to implement a very wide diversity of methods and techniques. CBAE programs place an increased emphasis on record keeping; similar resource and skill issues are raised here. The process of negotiating competencies entails articulation of the instructors' values and beliefs about what students ought to learn. To what extent are instructors willing and able to engage in such reflection rather than simply appropriating a normative set of standards developed nationally or on a statewide basis?

CBAE has by no means been embraced by the entire adult literacy education community, even within individually oriented programs. Laubach programs tend to emphasize bottom-up approaches to reading instruction, beginning with the names of the letters of the alphabet. Curriculum consists of a series of workbooks developed by the Laubach organization that can be supplemented by teacher-constructed materials. LVA curriculum may be constructed from a series of readers and workbooks available through the central organization or may be constructed by teachers and students, relying heavily on the students' experience as the source of materials. LVA diagnostic materials direct instructors to begin with bottom-up types of goals (phonic analysis and other word attack skills), but the handbook for tutors reflects a more holistic approach to reading instruction. Programs of Laubach Literacy Advance and Literacy Volunteers of America are oriented to meeting individual learner needs, although Laubach's international programs tend to be more community oriented.

There are a number of organizational arrangements for instruction, including one-to-one tutoring (particularly in volunteer programs), classroom groups, and learning laboratories in which a number of students work individually under the guidance of an instructor. Regardless of the curriculum used, these models tend to share a diagnostic-prescriptive view of the instructional process that often has been incorporated into a broader systems management model.

The typical instructional approach is very similar to that used with children, beginning with diagnostic testing to identify subskills that require remediation, providing instruction in those subskill areas, and testing again. Weber (1977b) suggests that student progress may be far below what learners could actually achieve if instructional programs were able to depart from public school and child-oriented models of instruction. The present emphasis on diagnosis focuses attention on perceived deficits rather than strengths. While the incorporation of the diagnostic-prescriptive approach into a broader systems management model appeals to an instructor's or administrator's sense of organization and purpose, there are dangers that skills development will be overemphasized at the expense of reading enjoyment and comprehension, that more time will be spent in testing than in actual instruction, and that the subskill approach also encourages the view that the learner has some sort of ailment, rather than placing illiteracy into a larger context.

Diagnosis is a process of evaluating a student's existing cognitive skills and personal characteristics such as motivation, anxiety, and self-concept (Lamorella et al. 1983). Information is collected through the use of personal observations, interviews, and three types of instruments: interest inventories, informal reading inventories, and standardized tests,(Newman 1980). Interest inventories are short lists of questions designed to solicit information useful for choosing material and for generally understanding a student's purposes for enrolling in a literacy program. Informal reading inventories consist of graded reading passages followed by comprehension questions. The instructor marks errors as the students reads and responds to questions and the instructor analyzes the patterns of errors to determine skills strengths and weaknesses. Standardized tests are either norm or criterion referenced. Norm-referenced instruments compare the student with others or a group. Criterion-referenced tests compare a student with prespecified criteria, with results written in the form of the percentage of criteria successfully completed.

Diagnosis implies some normative framework similar to that discussed in the section on needs assessment; an adult may be identified as needing literacy skills, and diagnostic procedures cannot be separated from an instructor's understanding of the process of reading or the purposes of literacy education, since it is within those frameworks that specific skills are identified for instruction. Furthermore, testing has developed an aura of objectivity that disappears when literacy skills are placed within their cultural contexts. Anderson (1981) cautions, "Test materials unrelated to examinees' past experience, or lacking cultural or social significance, often significantly mask ability" (p. 9).

There are a number of references that list, review, and assist instructors in choosing among and interpreting the results of the variety of tests available (see Anderson 1981; Galen 1980; Heathington and Koskinen 1982; Hribernick 1977; Newman 1980; Rossman, Fisk, and Roehl 1984). It is particularly important to assess the extent to which a test instrument actually assesses the skills that have been the objectives of instruction, rather than general literacy skills. It also is important to examine the underlying assumptions of the test creators, as they are reflected in the types of test items included.

Diagnosis tends to imply prescription; skills "needs" are identified in order to remediate those weaknesses. Some students seem unable to learn the prescribed skills, however. Literacy educators who are particularly concerned about these students have been examining IQs as well as tests for learning disabilities. Gold and Horn (1983), with a small sample of students in a prison setting, find that IQ appears more related to past achievement than to the ability to learn. Learning disabilities are a hotly disputed topic, among educators of children as well as adults. There is no consensus in the literature or validation research on the sources, definitions, diagnostic procedures, or remediation procedures for adult learning disabilities. Tests designed to identify learning disabilities share no common definition of adult, if indeed, they are oriented to adults at all (Coles 1980; Travis 1979).

The adult education literature on learning disabilities shows evidence of a fundamental dilemma. On the one hand, literacy educators approach their task with the belief that everyone can learn to read. In an effort to break away from the deficit perspective, they reject labeling students as learning disabled. These adult educators agree with many of the critics of the public school approach that this label has been created to place the blame for lack of progress on the individual rather than on an instructional system that is unable to respond to individual needs. The negative consequences of labeling children in the public schools have contributed to the problems faced by many illiterate adults today and labeling adults might lead to equally disastrous results.

There are some students who seem to have problems with such skills as short-term memory or left-to-right orientation (Cushenbery 1981), even though they appear to be otherwise competent adults. They have difficulty learning to read with subskill approaches, no matter how hard they work nor how dedicated their instructors may be. Whether or not they are labeled learning disabled, these students appear to require alternative instructional approaches. These students must be taught by instructors who are knowledgeable about the relationships between information processing, cognition, reading, sociocultural background, and instruction.

It is important for instructors to understand that not all adults have the same capabilities, not all adults will learn using the same sensory modalities, and there are alternatives available if one particular approach does not appear to be successful (Bowren 1981). According to Parker (n.d.a), special project funding for research on learning disabilities has been decreasing in the past few years, while the state of knowledge about reading instruction for adults who have difficulty learning using subskill approaches remains quite inadequate.

Community-oriented Programs

An individual orientation does not presuppose normative, prescribed curricula although such approaches will be found more often among individually oriented than community-oriented programs. Community-oriented programs' focus on situated needs, or the emphasis on understanding the social context within which individuals articulate specific needs, mitigates against the use of commercially developed curricula. Competency-based curriculum development may be appropriate for community-oriented programs when the competencies are locally determined and represent only one domain of the objectives of community-oriented literacy programs. Although the issues facing members of different communities vary, there are a number of issues many communities face in common, such as discrimination, unemployment, poor housing, and underrepresentation on local governing bodies. Curricula developed to address these and other issues may be quite useful to others if a mechanism existed for sharing and adapting these curricula to reflect local conditions.

All educators must engage in some kind of assessment of students' strengths and learning needs. Community-oriented programs emphasize the role of the community members in this analysis, while individually oriented

programs focus on the responsibility of the educator and such technology as test instruments and curriculum guides. While concern about learning modalities has not surfaced in the community-oriented program literature reviewed for this paper, it is a concern for any program teaching reading skills to adults. However, the emphasis on contextual learning found in community-oriented programs may minimize the extent to which community-oriented educators encounter learning problems related to a heavy emphasis on the subskill approach to reading.

Instructional Methods

Individually Oriented Programs

The literature is rich in the how-to's of bottom-up instruction; more recent material emphasizes techniques appropriate to interactive approaches (e.g., Bacon 1983; Crutchfield 1978; Moriarty and Wallerstein 1979; Newman 1980; Rigg and Taylor 1979; Schneiderman 1978; Thistlethwaite 1983). As described by Boraks and Richardson (1981), instructional strategies consistent with the view of reading as a process of creating meaning focus on broadening the social/cultural perspective of the learner, help the learner to participate actively in the learning process, and stress reading as a meaning-making process. The reading process must become an area of personal reflection for students; they must actively engage in changing from using bottom-up to interactive approaches to reading. Students' models seem to be influenced by the model underlying the instructor's approach as well as by their prior education (Boraks and Schumacher 1981).

Interactive models of the reading process have wide-ranging implications for instruction beyond simply encouraging the abandonment of purely bottom-up reading strategies. Vocabulary, for example, is linked to reading skill, although the research in this area often is criticized (e.g., Mezynski 1983). Schema theory pushes educators to view vocabulary in the context of discourse that reflects larger social relations rather than standardized dictionary definitions (Gudschinsky 1977; Sheridan 1981). Questions are used often in reading instruction, usually to assess rather than to facilitate comprehension. Schema theory suggests that such an orientation may actually interfere with comprehension; readers are required to differentiate between their preexisting knowledge and the new text rather than to integrate new information with existing schemata (Durkin 1981; Hacker 1980). The limitations of readability formulas that do not consider the reader's world knowledge become even more pronounced within a schema-theoretic framework.

Language experience stories, in which a student's narration is written down and used as the text for instruction, traditionally have been a top-down approach for beginning reading instruction. In terms of schema theory, existing schemata (the student's experience) are used to learn new schemata (written language) (Hacker 1980). The language experience approach is used extensively in LVA programs as well as in many ABE programs.

Computer-assisted instruction (CAI) is being developed and tested in a number of states (see Eason and Parker 1983). Researchers claim that it is

successful in building confidence and independence as well as literacy skills for learners (e.g., Buckley and Rauch 1979; Caldwell 1980; Diem and Fairweather 1980; Rizza and Walker-Hunter 1979). The information in the literature is intriguing but suffers from several shortcomings. Studies compare CAI outcomes with those of instruction that is not individualized (e.g., Caldwell 1980); this is not necessarily an appropriate comparison group. Studies often do not differentiate achievement gains made by students with different initial skill levels, although this may be important information, nor do they explore the possible influence of the fact that the computer-assisted instruction group usually is self-selected. Although the structure of the curriculum is described, the content of the material used for skills instruction usually is left out since the emphasis tends to be on a subskills approach in which context is relatively insignificant. The use of standardized tests to determine outcomes does not confront the possibility that the structure of computer-assisted instruction may better prepare students for the structure of such tests.

Nonetheless, the initial research in CAI is exciting and promising, although limited at present. For those students for whom the subskill approach is successful and immediate feedback functions as a powerful motivator, existing computer-assisted instructional packages may provide a viable alternative to other instructional media. There are very few commercially available instructional programs that address adult literacy education specifically, however. This stage of development of CAI has been termed "electronic page turning," and is similar to work in programmed texts with the added interest of working on an electronic system. Many catalogs identify programs in spelling or basic arithmetic as appropriate for grades five to adult and contain descriptions of cute animal characters and child-oriented games.

One response is the use of programs that were not initially designed for instructional applications, such as word processing programs. Judd (1982), for example, describes the use of word processing programs to record language experience stories in which elements may then be manipulated according to the students' learning objectives. Vacc (1984) describes the use of word processing programs for sentence-combining and other instructional exercises.

Another response has been to pool expertise and resources to evaluate those instructional programs that are available, to adapt programs originally designed for children, and to develop partnerships with programmers to create appropriate software. In the northwest region of the United States, for example, four states--Alaska, Washington, Oregon, and Utah--have developed a consortium that shares the expense, effort, and results of software reviews and adaptations. Members look for publishers who will allow instructor revisions of programs, and they emphasize user control in their review criteria.

In a related area, some work is being done in computer-managed instruction (CMI) in which the computer is used as a tool for analyzing diagnostic tests and developing prescriptive instruction plans. Computers certainly show a great potential for facilitating the record-keeping chores of literacy programs, although this area also is only in the beginning stages of development.

Computer-assisted instruction is really an integration of method, curriculum, and materials. It raises a host of philosophical, ethical, organizational, political, technological, and pedagogical issues. The potential power of computers is only vaguely understood as a medium for drill and practice instruction or for yet unknown aspects of learning and development. CAI, so far, largely continues the tradition of fashioning adult instructional materials in the image of those created for children. There is some examination in the literature of underlying issues in relation to microcomputer use (e.g., Diem and Fairweather 1980; Meierhenry 1982; Vacc 1984), but in general, this area appears to mirror others with an emphasis on the how-to's taking precedence over a thoughtful examination of the larger issues involved in the relationship between illiterate adults and this fast-developing technology.

Community-oriented Programs

In community-oriented programs, instructional methods range from highly structured to unstructured but appear to share a learner-centered emphasis. This means that problem-oriented discussions and other group activities are used extensively, and one-to-one tutoring is the exception rather than the rule (Association for Community Based Education 1983). Emphasis is placed upon developing analytical skills and "social literacy," or the ability to place issues in broader social contexts, rather than simply developing technical literacy or providing solutions to problems.

Paulo Freire's influence is strongly felt in the community-oriented literacy education community (ibid.). Schema theory supports Freire's work and that of others who view literacy as the process of "naming the world," creating meaning by critically examining the relationship between print, words, and the social world. Freire's use of "generative themes," words and concepts carrying strong emotional meanings for learners, is one way of activating schemata at many levels.

Freire's approach to literacy education depends upon instructors and students engaging in dialog with each other; the roles of learner and instructor become intertwined. Students develop the ability to analyze their social reality critically as they explore the meanings--in their social reality--of the words and sentences they are learning to read and write. Instructors facilitate this process by problematizing reality, which is done by raising questions and stimulating thought with the use of visual aids or other media that evoke discussion of issues facing community members. This lends itself to an interactive approach to reading instruction, since existing world knowledge is highly valued and is used as the framework within which new knowledge is constructed and evaluated.

There is little in the community-oriented program literature about the use of microcomputers; this is not surprising since the field tends to be negative toward technology of many kinds. In addition, existing computer-assisted instruction is highly individually oriented. However, computers are tools that can be developed for a variety of purposes. Heaney (1983), in another context, addresses the importance of assisting adults in developing a sense of their ability to use technology for their own ends. Community-oriented

programs now face the challenge of appropriating microcomputer technology for their own purposes.

Heaney (1982) discusses the relationships between power, information, and the uses of microcomputers. He focuses on the strengths and limitations of microcomputers for assisting community-oriented educators' networking and information-sharing efforts, although there are implications for the kinds of instructional goals valued by community-oriented educators. Heaney concludes:

> Microcomputers cannot create or substitute for a movement toward social change. But they can greatly enhance the abilities of members of such a movement to comprehend the inequalities of their world, to imagine alternatives and design appropriate strategies, to reflect on and evaluate their own actions, and to collaborate with each other in creating the future. (p. 170)

Materials

Individually Oriented Programs

There are a number of checklists available for evaluating instructional materials (e.g., "Checklist for Evaluating" 1981), and there are numerous lists of commercially available materials, many with useful annotations (e.g., Forinash 1978; Johnson 1977; Korpi 1979; Literacy Volunteers of America 1981; O'Brien 1982). Bibliographies abound in the ERIC system and in numerous books and pamphlets. Evaluation of instructional materials must include an analysis of the approach to reading instruction incorporated in the material, since many are skill books or workbooks based upon a subskill approach. In addition, the content of instructional materials should be analyzed in terms of the beliefs and values communicated by implication. For example, when Coles conducted a content analysis of ABE readers in 1977, he found that the characters were isolated, conformist, uncritical, and filled with self-blame. Coles comments: "What we have in these adult basic education texts . . . are political statements about social relations in our society, statements, which, unfortunately, are predominantly against the interests of the adults who use the texts, many of whom are minorities and poor" (p. 52).

Many instructors prefer to make their own materials, based upon the specific interests and needs of their students. (See Lawson 1981 for an interesting approach.) Unfortunately, many teacher-created materials suffer from some of the same drawbacks as commercial materials, due to the belief that the reading difficulty of materials must be tightly controlled through the use of "readability" formulas. This usually means that the number of words, the variety of sentence patterns, and the number of concepts must be limited. Gudschinsky (1977) explains, "The result is an unnatural 'primerese' in which, at its worst, the reader can neither find sufficient clues for guessing what the author has said, nor check on the correctness of what he has read" (p. 42).

Dissatisfaction with the practice of using formulas that inhibit meaningful writing for adult literacy students is echoed by Edward Fry (1980), the

author of one of the most widely used formulas: "I am aghast when people take syllable counting as a religion and find themselves inhibited from using proper vocabulary by the constraint of readability formulas" (p. 177). Clearly, there exists a need for new ways of thinking about materials appropriate for adult new readers and those learning to read, overcoming limited conceptions of appropriate level and content.

Community-oriented Programs

Community-oriented literacy programs often develop their own materials, although they also supplement these with commercially prepared texts. They use the range of printed materials available to address the concerns of community members, not just materials specially developed for use in literacy programs (Association for Community Based Education 1983).

The form of many commercially produced materials presents special problems for community-oriented educators who are committed to social action. They are trying to assist adults in developing a critical perspective of social reality and in believing in their ability to influence their own lives. However, traditional reading comprehension exercises, for example, are based upon a model in which the instructor is the expert and correct ways of interpreting a passage are to be discovered by the student. Such exercises reinforce the traditional roles of instructor and student and support the concept of education as an individual process of learning the "right" answers. Community-oriented programs emphasize dialogue in which the group explores the meanings implicit in written passages, interpreted in light of their social context. Commercially produced materials, therefore, become the object of analysis as well as one means for facilitating skill development.

Conclusion

At some point the distinction between individually and community-oriented programs begins to break down. Certainly, neither is a homogeneous community, and there is a limit to the generalizations that can be made about either while remaining true to the realities of the practice of adult literacy education. The categories admittedly are pushed to their extremes in this section in order to emphasize the distinction.

Individually and community-oriented adult literacy programs have some common concerns. They share many participant objectives such as increased independence, enhanced self-confidence, literacy skill acquisition, and an enlarged range of opportunities for enjoying the material benefits and rewards of American society. Individually oriented programs, however, stress individual action to change a person's life circumstances while community-oriented programs emphasize collective action with an overtly politicized agenda. These differences have major implications for many program aspects.

It is important to remember that illiterate adults are not a homogeneous group either. The question confronting the adult literacy education community is not, "Which program model is better?" or "Which set of underlying

assumptions is true?" Rather, educators must question which approach appears to meet the needs of which persons in particular circumstances. And when it comes to personal commitment to a particular program model, educators will find only limited guidance in research and literature reviews. This is an issue of personal philosophy that only can be illuminated through thoughtful reflection about one's own underlying values and beliefs.

CREATING THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN ADULT LITERACY EDUCATION

The issues underlying differing approaches to adult literacy education usually are framed as either/or choices, as if literacy could be approached only from one direction and illiterate adults were a homogeneous group. It appears, however, that community-oriented and individually oriented programs each work successfully with a particular segment of the larger group of American illiterate adults. Different approaches may be appropriate for different groups of illiterate adults when literacy is related to the circumstances of their lives. Choices about program models and aspects must be based upon personal beliefs, institutional mission and resources, and sophisticated understanding of the problematic nature of illiteracy, the reading process, and the characteristics of illiterate adults. Increased program effectiveness will require dialogue between community-oriented and individually oriented educators, a willingness to change, and improved and refocused research and distribution of published documents. This chapter addresses these issues, particularly focusing on the possibility of increasing the number of community-oriented adult literacy education programs.

The Moving Picture of the Present Status of Literacy Education

Illiterate adults often are described with broad generalizations that contribute to constructing stereotypes that obscure reality. In an effort to begin breaking down those images, Hunter and Harman (1979), building upon work by Eyster (1975), develop a typology of illiterate adults ranging from those most mobile and successful within the larger society to those most withdrawn and fatalistic. Fingeret (1983a) suggests a schema differentiating between illiterate adults who are nonetheless successfully operating within the larger literate society and those whose social, psychological, and geographical worlds are severely limited. Both approaches recognize that illiteracy does not, by itself, determine an individual's relationship to the larger society.

Adults' perspectives on literacy education will reflect their assessments of their concrete situations; literacy programs must do likewise. A range of program models is necessary to correspond to the range of illiterate adults' characteristics and their social contexts.

Individually oriented efforts, including many ABE and volunteer programs, probably have been unable to attract larger numbers of persons because they are based upon assumptions appropriate to those whom they do serve: illiterate adults who already are somewhat detached from the bonds of mutual obligation of their communities; who have the willingness and ability to seek out and enroll in programs; who desire the anonymity of one-to-one instruction; who are able to learn to read through the primary use of bottom-up methods; and who believe that literacy, by itself, can make some difference in their

lives. Recruitment campaigns may attract some new students, but probably will not attract significantly increased numbers of illiterate adults unless the program is reoriented to community development (see Irish 1980b).

Community-oriented efforts also are limited by their philosophy in a different way. They are working with illiterate adults who are poor and disenfranchised from the larger society. Their focus on the community may create barriers for illiterate adults who, despite their illiteracy, are not poor and, in fact, may be economically successful and passing as literate. Adults who have been able to reap some rewards from the economy and are narrowly directed toward the goal of learning how to read may find community-oriented programs overly demanding and invasive.

Each type of program has made a real and important contribution to literacy education in the United States. Individually oriented programs have been influential in increasing access to literacy education, developing public awareness of American adult illiteracy, encouraging research, and providing teacher training. Community-oriented efforts appear to have provided a true alternative for illiterate adults whose primary concern is improving the quality of life in their communities. The contributions of all these programs are valued, but it must be recognized that the largest group of illiterate adults--those who also are poor and of minority background--seems to be served best by the smallest and least-funded group of programs: community-oriented literacy programs. On this basis, it appears that community-oriented efforts need to be expanded.

There is a question about the role that Federal policy can play in developing programs that are committed to social change, particularly since change will affect those already in positions of power and dominance. Mezirow, Darkenwald, and Knox (1975) and Hunter and Harman (1979) discuss the need for policy changes at length, particularly citing the different resource distributions appropriate for working with groups at different levels. Darkenwald and Valentine (1984) question the public policy emphasis on individual employment, citing the facts that this is not the most relevant goal for large numbers of illiterate adults and that many of the most important outcomes of literacy education are indirectly related to employment, at best. Delker (1984) claims that nationally, ABE is responding to Hunter and Harman's call for community-oriented programming, but he is referring predominantly to community-situated, individually oriented programs.

Policy encourages and supports particular ways of approaching adult literacy education in this country, but it is not deterministic. There exists no centralized or standardized curriculum or set of instructional methods. This provides flexibility, allowing not only for differences in methods and materials, but also for wide differences in the perspectives, attitudes, values, and assumptions that individual educators and learners bring to the literacy education process. Literacy educators may look to policymakers for assistance, but they must look to each other for leadership. Policy change will be the result of concerted efforts on the part of adult literacy educators and others who share their concerns. Leadership for policy and programming change must emerge from within the ranks of the literacy community; it must foster a

new spirit of inquiry and communication among all educators involved in adult literacy work.

Many studies paint a static picture of literacy education in the United States, but movement is evident. There are numerous examples of States that have used ABE funding creatively. In Vermont, for example, tutors work with students in their homes and develop materials appropriate to students' unique interests and needs (Eberle and Robinson 1980). New Jersey is using ABE funds to design programs specifically for its large numbers of urban out-of-school illiterate youths. Massachusetts is creating an experimental cable television system to meet the needs of homebound illiterate adults in a particular community. Maryland is actively encouraging work with communities to develop life-related instruction. In a 1983 meeting, a group of community-oriented educators articulated their interest in sharing information about successful practices more broadly, improving programming, increasing their visibility, and forging stronger links with as well as increasing cooperation among the groups involved in adult literacy education (Association for Community Based Education 1983). In addition, the California State libraries are developing a statewide program emphasizing local collaboration with individual communities, student-focused evaluation, flexibility, and innovation. The National Adult Literacy Project funded by the National Institute of Education and the Business Council for Effective Literacy offer as yet unknown contributions.

Many who work in ABE are dissatisfied with students' slow progress and with the program's inability to involve significant numbers of illiterate adults. Lowe and Jones (1983), editors of the Virginia ABE Newsletter, published a letter to their congressional representative in which they state:

> The political system in the United States would be radically changed if large numbers of the nation's previously illiterate began to read and, suddenly equipped to deal with the system, began to demand some changes in the opportunities society affords them. Does our nation really want to end illiteracy? Working piecemeal with one individual at a time allows us to believe that we are trying without any real risk that we will succeed. (p. 5)

Politics, Ethics, and Funding

Literacy education is political; it has the potential to influence the relationship between individuals, groups, and the larger society. It affects the distribution of knowledge and, therefore, the potential use of knowledge as power. It can result in individuals and groups demanding a new status in their society. Even narrowly focused, individually oriented literacy education geared solely to employment can result in increased numbers of adults demanding the right to employment opportunities that have the potential to support their continued growth and development.

One of the most often cited obstacles to change in adult literacy education is the uncertainty of funding as well as the limited amount of resources allocated at Federal, State, and local levels. If literacy educators desire increased amounts and stability of funding from the Federal Government, they

must become involved in more than just lobbying for increased amounts of money for a particular program, such as ABE. They also must participate in the larger political processes of this Nation. Funding and policy reflect not only feelings about the marginality of illiterate adults in the United States, but they also reflect the larger political will to accept the status quo, with its unequal distribution of power, opportunity, and resources.

Collective action is more powerful than individual action in the realm of social change. Literacy educators must develop networks that reach beyond affiliation with a particular type of program. There does not exist a system of adult literacy education in the United States. There are individually oriented and community-oriented programs, including ABE, LLA, and LVA programs, and other programs that may identify with none of these terms. There are no real links among all of these programs other than those created on a local basis. In addition, there are university-based researchers and trainers who may never develop consistent lines of communication with instructors, administrators, or students. Most of the individuals involved in adult literacy education are used to thinking about their roles in relation to the mission of their institution or organization. The goals of individual programs must be placed within a larger context. State and National leadership must be exerted to bring together all literacy educators, regardless of program affiliation.

Literacy educators must see their efforts as part of a complex, multifaceted approach to literacy education in the United States. This requires that literacy educators tolerate diverse approaches and that they can articulate their own political and ethical frameworks. Brookfield (1984) asserts:

> For an adult educator to make moral or ethical judgements regarding what should be taught and what kind of society should be encouraged, is normal and inevitable. We may disagree seriously about the merit of the virtues which others hold dear, but we should not be surprised to find that they inform our practice. (p. 89)

Change

Change will be difficult due to many factors such as existing attitudes, past experiences, the current economic and social climate, institutional and organizational constraints, the scarcity of substantive research, and the lack of documentation about community-oriented literacy education programs. It also will be difficult to continue providing services to those whose needs are presently being met, while developing additional alternatives. The task confronting literacy educators desiring to work with increased numbers of illiterate adults is challenging and complex.

In many ways it extends far beyond the scope of this paper. Many individually oriented literacy educators are aware of the existence of community-oriented programs but are uncomfortable with politicized perspectives. They often are concerned that educational goals may be displaced by abstract, utopian notions of social change. Instructors and administrators have been trained to be authority figures and experts, and they worry that facilitating

may simply be a euphemism for abdicating responsibility. Most important, many individually oriented literacy educators have internalized the belief that illiterate adults are not capable of participating with educators in creating responses to their problems. Embracing community-oriented models will mean that educators must "break down old dichotomies between teaching and learning, theory and practice, [and] learning knowledge vs. creating knowledge together" (Luttrell 1983, p. 56). It will not be painless.

Community-oriented educators have their concerns also; they are worried about becoming co-opted by the establishment, risking the loss of their primary identification with the community through layers of technical trappings. Pantoja and Perry (1979) describe some of the barriers to change:

> There is much in the origins and posture of alternative education that was admirable, but that can now serve to deter us from our mission of community development: our frequent insistence on considering structure as negative, the lack of accountability for resources in the learning network, an emphasis on student autonomy in the learning process, and a mystification of experiential learning. (p. 29)

Universities and researchers can play a role in facilitating communication between individually oriented and community-oriented educators; this requires a rethinking of the role the university has played so far in supporting the development of ABE programs. College-trained ABE personnel are socialized into the dominant culture through the system of rewards and the models available in the higher education system. Higher education, with notable exceptions (e.g., The University for Man, Manhattan, Kansas), is subject matter centered rather than learner centered, stresses individual achievement rather than collaboration, stresses problem solving rather than problematizing, is individual rather than community focused, and utilizes didactic rather than dialogical pedagogy. As the first step, therefore, university educators must be willing "to examine critically their own values, assumptions and perspectives and to be transformed in that process" (Rosenman n.d., p. 7).

The field of adult literacy education has become mired in the specialization rewarded in the university environment, losing the sense of truly touching persons' lives. Lumsden (1979) explains it thus:

> Somewhat along the way, American educators either forgot or rejected the notion that learning is feeling. We have, I am afraid, become preoccupied with inane and petty behavioral objectives, competency-based instruction, and criterion referenced testing, where these preoccupations are defined and quantified in terms of cognitive inputs and observable cognitive outputs. . . . The instructional action takes place at both the cerebral and glandular levels. We remember and practice what can be understood and felt. (p. 302)

Within this framework, it is no surprise that adult literacy instructors who have been trained at colleges and universities often seem to have difficulty teaching effectively. The model they have been taught, through the process as well as the content of their education, emphasizes loyalty to a profession rather than a community, to a subject matter area rather than to

people (Rippetoe and Maes 1979). Instructors who are oriented to narrow instructional goals rather than to holistic views of adults as community members will be unable to establish the interpersonal relationships fundamental to facilitating learning. Instructors must be provided with new models of the teaching-learning interaction through the process of their own education. It must also be remembered that training instructors to work collaboratively with students must take place within a larger process of overall literacy program change.

There are numerous publications citing the need for the "National political will" to support serious approaches to the problem of adult illiteracy. The literacy education community today must first develop a professional will. Literacy educators must decide that they are willing to invest the resources to open and use new lines of communication and that they have the responsibility and the personal strength and security to reflect deeply upon their work and to try new directions.

Literacy education in general raises difficult issues about the relationship between education and development, the responsibility of educators to their immediate geographical and social contexts, and the ethics of influencing the lives of others. The extent and limits of professional responsibility are difficult to identify. Serious debate on Federal, State, and local levels about increasing the numbers of community-oriented programs will raise these and other issues. Such debate has to include illiterate adults; they are the most knowledgeable about the functions of literacy in their social contexts. More important, their lives and futures are being considered.

Research and Inquiry

This chapter has been written so far as if some agreed-upon set of characteristics and practices for community-oriented literacy programs exists. They do not. To a certain extent the practice of community-oriented literacy education is invented anew in each community through the collaboration of educators and community members. It depends upon educators understanding their philosophical foundation so well that it serves to guide their work. However, it should be possible to bring a great deal more conceptual clarity, philosophical rigor, and systematically collected information to assist in the deliberations. Concepts such as "community," "participation," "empowerment," "collaboration," and "literacy" require thoughtful, probing analysis. The problems that existing community-oriented programs have encountered must be shared and their responses analyzed (see Ewert 1982).

Researchers must continue to expand the types of research conducted, including additional ethnographic work (Rogers 1984). Research methodology, as well as the quality of published studies, must continue to improve. In addition, university-based researchers must collaborate more often with those working in literacy programs to ensure meaningful inquiry and well constructed published reports. Access to the research literature must be increased through both the content and the location of literature. The ERIC database is now available through computer telecommunications links. Consideration must be given to whether there are other ways to use these channels. Journal

editorial boards must provide resources to assist practitioners in the development of articles suitable for publication. The conduct and utilization of research should become a research priority.

Individually oriented as well as community-oriented educators will benefit from investigation of the processes through which adults learn how to read. Reading research appears to support the approach taken in many community-oriented literacy programs in which reading is viewed as a process of constructing meaning, using materials that have emotional as well as cognitive content. Lack of research, however, leaves questions about the extent to which this model might be appropriate for other programs, as well as uncertainty about the extent to which students in community-oriented literacy programs actually learn how to read. The relationship between actual literacy instruction and the broader social goals of community-oriented literacy programs is not at all clear.

Volunteers are used widely by individually oriented and community-oriented programs, yet very little is known about effective volunteer programs and the resources they require. Some volunteer programs may be seen as advocacy efforts since volunteering provides opportunities for persons to meet who may otherwise never encounter each other's differing cultures and life-styles. At the same time, volunteer programs may reinforce stereotypes and alienate students from misguided but well-intentioned tutors. Volunteers may multiply the impact of a program, or they may undermine its credibility when insufficiently trained or supervised.

The characteristics of illiterate adults must be further illuminated. Literacy programs that insist on recruiting students by publicizing their functional incompetence may be participating in creating the very problems the literacy education community is committed to addressing. Research must be conducted with sophisticated models that address the interaction between the individual, culture, and larger social forces. Furthermore, research must go beyond examining illiterate adults only in the context of literacy programs. It must explore the complexity of their rich and often difficult lives, their strengths as well as their inability to use the printed word.

The technology of instruction, from computers to diagnostic-prescriptive methods, must be examined for its strengths, its limits, and its biases. Competency-based education must be explored critically, exposing the relationship between theory and practice. Handbooks focusing on how to teach must be accompanied by materials stimulating thought about theory, philosophy, values, beliefs, dilemmas, assumptions, controversies, and purposes of adult literacy education.

Conclusion

Illiterate adults and literacy educators are diverse groups. Right now it appears that individually oriented literacy programs predominate while large numbers of illiterate adults may prefer to participate in community-oriented efforts. Therefore, additional community-oriented programs appear to be needed. This is consistent with Hunter and Harman's (1979) conclusion that

> a major shift in national education policy is needed to serve the educational needs of disadvantaged adults . . . [which calls for] new, pluralistic, community-based initiatives . . . [that would be] action-oriented . . . [and would] increase the skills of community members to interact with and change the mainstream culture and its institutions. (pp. 104-6)

This development depends only partially on policymakers; primarily it requires adult literacy educators to make a commitment to investigate their efforts more thoroughly and systematically, to collaborate across program boundaries, and to transcend disciplinary or organizational loyalties. If programs are going to change, people who create them must change.

In addition, research and development efforts are needed in areas such as reading, competency-based education, and volunteerism that will benefit all literacy programs. The role of higher education institutions in the support and development of adult literacy education programs, instructors, and materials must be examined. All literacy educators must engage in continuing conceptual clarification and examination of conventional wisdom and stereotypes.

Above all, it is important to remember that education will not create additional jobs, solve the problems of crime and malnutrition, or make the world safe from terrorism. Social structures and social forces beyond the reach of literacy educators are at work maintaining the structures of social inequality. Education can, however, provide tools and access to opportunities for working together with others to change those structures and, in the process, create rather than merely accept the future.

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